PS3™ PlayStation 3 | PSP® PlayStation Portable | PS VITA PlayStation Vita

PlayStation®

ial Magazine

Issue 049 September 2011

MAN'S LAST STAND
It's us or them.

BATTLE TESTED
Modern Warfare 3
Battlefield 3
Brothers in Arms 4

PlayStation - The Official Magazine Issue 49 (September 2011)

RESISTANCE 3

PSV from A to Z
26 REASONS TO LOVE THE VITA

"We are not just trying to sell plastic." p.74

+

EL SHADDAI
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UNCHARTED 3 **SLY COOPER** MASS EFFECT 3 **STAR TREK**

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- Intense Violence
- Blood
- Sexual Themes
- Strong Language
- Drug Reference
- Use of Alcohol

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SEPTEMBER 2011

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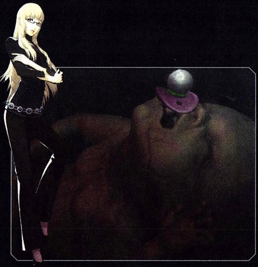
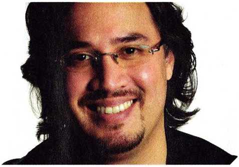
24 **BATTLEFIELD 3**
The war for modern combat dominance continues with *Battlefield 3*. We recon the new tools of destruction and the amendments to the series' vaunted multiplayer mayhem.



84 **CATHERINE**
Nightmarish puzzles, dreamy women, and plenty of infidelity to go around.



Funny Thing

All is forgiven. Now let's move on. Together.

Some say love is blind. I respectfully disagree. Others have made the outrageous claim that love is unconditional. They are wrong.

But the mad genius who first described love as a "funny thing" might be the only person who truly understands my deepest feelings about PlayStation. Because this 16-year affair with Sony's spectacular array of hardware—along with all that it offers—has been a very funny thing indeed.

It began way back in the mid-'90s with the original PlayStation, which delivered my endless fix of beloved JRPGs. Then, with PS2, my tastes broadened to include some of the most spectacular gaming experiences ever—innovative releases like *Ico*, which shared my heart with blustery blockbusters like *God of War*. Then came the clingy days, with the PSP desperately tagging along with me wherever I went, sort of like a needy paramour who kept initiating a conversation but never had enough to say. Finally, PlayStation grew up with PS3, offering a mature, sophisticated experience unlike anything else.

Problem is, that sophistication came at a price—literally. PS3 was expensive in her early days. Oh, she was worth it, as she was fond of telling all of us early adopters. But she was, without a doubt, a high-maintenance mistress.

When the PlayStation Network was hacked and everything went kablooey, I naturally stood by the PS3. This was not blind or unconditional devotion. I, too, was angry. I, too, was disappointed. But in the end, my relationship with the PlayStation proved to be fair and true. Once the Network was restored, I was welcomed back with open (and generous) arms. And since then, the PlayStation has grown up even more. Lessons have been learned, and our relationship is now even stronger. Love is funny like that.

GARY

Gary Steinman
Editor in Chief
twitter.com/TinyManRages

Gary Steinman
Editor in Chief
He once aspired to be Editor in Chief of respected crafting mag *Crochet Today*, but now the sagacious Gary Steinman hosts a Court TV show called *Charging Judgement* in which he doles out justice while driving a big rig.

Roger Burchill
Managing Editor
Roger Burchill gets knocked down, but he gets up again—you're never going to keep him down. Roger Burchill gets knocked down, but he gets up again—you're never going to keep him down. Roger Burchill...

Ken Bousquet
Art Director
When most people lose a sock, they shrug and accept their fate, stopping only briefly to mourn their wayward clothing. Not Ken Bousquet. He never leaves a good sock behind. And thanks to him, the rest of us can sleep soundly.

Scott Butterworth
Associate Editor
Dedicated. Passionate. Inspired. These are all words. Words that Scott Butterworth has probably said out loud at some point, or maybe just scribbled in a Trapper Keeper. He can't really remember.

Ryan Taljonick
Assistant Editor
In the event of a water landing, Assistant Editor Ryan Taljonick can be used as a flotation device. In the event of a Broadway musical, he can put on a coat and tails and do the can-can. Jazz hands, Ryan. Jazz hands!

Anne Lewis
Editorial Intern
When the chips are down, Super Intern Anne Lewis will totally go buy another bag because she knows a party is nothing if it doesn't have chips. She'll probably get a slushie or something too.

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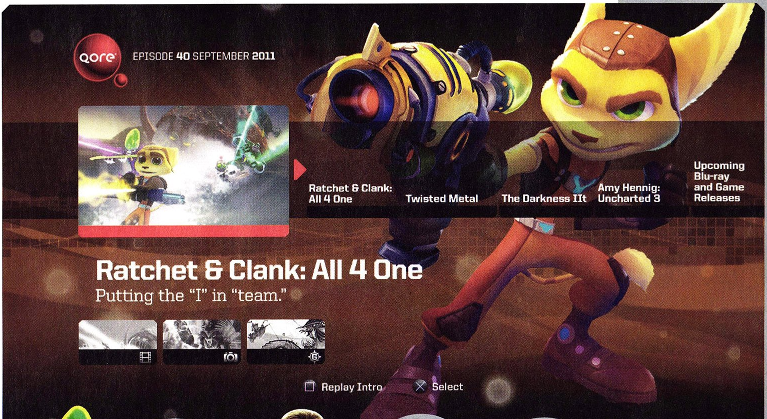
Inside Qore Episode 40

Get your group on

We just keep dreaming about Insomniac, with a visit to the developer's North Carolina studio and a close look at *Ratchet & Clank: All 4 One*. This four-player co-op platformer emphasizes teamwork—and trash-talking your friends. Another multiplayer favorite, *Twisted Metal* returns, with David Jaffe back in the driver's seat of this destructive racer. The creepy FPS *The Darkness II* loads up crazy gameplay; four shoulder buttons control regular and demon-headed arms. And as *Uncharted 3: Drake's Deception* nears release, we explore its story with writer and Naughty Dog creative director, Amy Hennig.

VERONICA BELMONT HOST OF QORE

Available 9/6/2011 on the PlayStation® Network



qore EPISODE **40** SEPTEMBER **2011**

Ratchet & Clank: All 4 One

Twisted Metal

The Darkness IIt

Amy Hennig: Uncharted 3

Upcoming Blu-ray and Game Releases

Ratchet & Clank: All 4 One

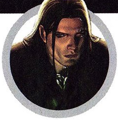
Putting the "I" in "team."

☐ Replay Intro

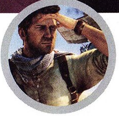
✕ Select

Ratchet & Clank: All 4 One
Putting the "I" in "team."

Twisted Metal
This racer has so much metal, it goes up to 11.



The Darkness II
Things that go bump in the night.



Amy Hennig: Uncharted 3
A map to the game and its writer.

Upcoming Blu-ray and Game Releases
Kick back for Labor Day with our favorite office-based movies.

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Individual episodes can be purchased for $2.99 and a 13-episode subscription can be purchased for $24.99. Qore subscribers have access to Betas, demos, themes, and additional downloadable content each month.

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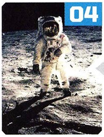
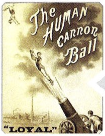
04



05

Happy B-day, Neil Armstrong
The first man to walk on the moon, born this day in 1930. We'd say that warrants a Platinum Trophy.



07

International Forgiveness Day
Today is all about forgiveness, which is good considering the abuse our interns have endured. Actually, we don't really care if they forgive us or not.

11

Shinji Mikami's Birthday
Today we tip our hat to Shinji Mikami, creator of the *Resident Evil* series. His birth led to zombies and lickers, which still give us the creeps.

14

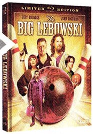
National Creamsicle Day
Our nation shall unify in the enjoyment of magical cream-filled ice pops, which taste like a mix of rainbows, unicorns, and the color orange.

PS3
NO MORE HEROES

16

The Dude on Blu-ray
The Big Lebowski—the film responsible for Dudeism, an organized religion, is finally coming to Blu-ray. Duuude!

In Stores
No More Heroes: Heroes' Paradise, Altered Beast



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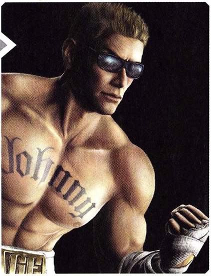
Finish Him!
Johnny Cage's signature nut punch made its debut on the big screen 16 years ago today, when the original *Mortal Kombat* film performed a theatrical fatality.



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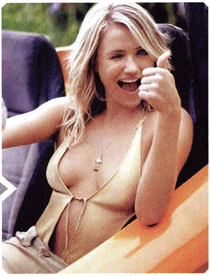
23

In Stores
Deus Ex: Human Revolution



28

Aug. 26-28 PAX Prime
While we expect to see a lot of cosplay action at the Penny Arcade Expo, we're a bit concerned about how many more dudes we'll see dressed as Chun-Li

PAX
PENNY ARCADE Expo

PS3
MADDEN NFL 12

30

Cameron Diaz's Birthday
Cameron may be nearing the peak of the proverbial hill, but her stint in *Bad Teacher* reminds us that there's something about Diaz.

In Stores
Madden NFL 12

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Violence

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The Big 10

Stories everyone's talking about

Air Apparent
More details on BioShock Infinite's floating city, Columbia.
⏩Page 12

Tekken A Punch
Namco gets ready to fight back with Tekken X Street Fighter.
⏩Page 14

Start Collecting
Metal Gear leads the next wave of remastered HD game collections.
⏩Page 17

What Lockout?
Madden NFL 12 ensures that pro football will be played this fall.
⏩Page 18

The Great Debate
PTOM editors draw blades over Assassin's Creed: Revelations.
⏩Page 22

1

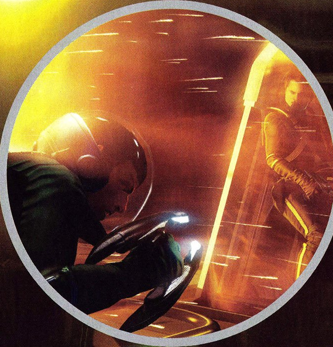
Beam us up

A surprisingly polished Star Trek has us ready to join the Federation

The last thing the world needs is another over-the-shoulder, cover-based shooter. Developer Digital Extremes is acutely aware of this. The team's game based off J.J. Abrams' 2009 *Star Trek* movie reboot defies this first-blush assumption aggressively. It also addresses the primary problem with most co-op games: they don't require cooperation. *Star Trek* forces it upon us, it demands we work together, and it takes us down viciously if we don't.

Most of us know *Star Trek* well enough to understand the Kirk/Spock dynamic. We can't think of a better (or an older) duo to play cooperatively. They're the best of buds, and they've got each other's back regardless of the risk. So when, for instance, Kirk's paralyzed by poison, Spock has to carry the crippled Captain to Med Bay.

This particular scene perfectly showcased Digital Extremes' gameplay focus. Kirk's distorted vision makes it tough to cover an engaged Spock, who's performing a medical procedure (a simple minigame) that



We can't think of a better duo to play cooperatively. Kirk and Spock are the best of buds, and they've got each other's back regardless of the risk.

must not be interrupted by attacking enemies. This is a game about two personalities that offer distinct experiences, so they see, behave, and play differently. Even the cutscenes, which are more interactive than intrusive, play out differently depending on whose perspective we're playing. It's a small touch, but it truly sells the idea that we're playing as someone other than, oh say, a carbon-copy space marine.

The story's specifics are still under wraps, but the small slice we saw was more than enough to get our blood pumping. Our demo opened with an alien-occupied *Enterprise* and proof that this team isn't afraid to rough up the crew. This particular level had an excellent pace with plenty of building tension and well-timed release. *Star Trek's* trademark levity kept the *Dead Space*-like atmosphere that comes from exploring a derelict starship from becoming too oppressive, and unexpected twists in the action and the enemy's behavior kept us on our toes.

The presentation variety is a large component of what's shaping *Star Trek* into a wonderful-looking action game. Even after a mere glimpse of a 20-minute sequence, we're confident that it won't be the stale shooter we assumed at first blush. We're particularly interested to see how setting phasers to stun versus kill affects mission objectives and influences the opportunities presented during encounters.

Come stardate 2012, we'll eagerly board the ***Enterprise*** to see where things will (boldly) go from there.

Captain's Log

Marianne Krawczyk's name isn't widely known, but she's responsible for almost all of the *God of War* series' writing. We particularly enjoy the poetic nature of her *GOW* narration monologues. While there probably won't be much shouting at Ares in Kirk and Spock's future, we expect her to nail this one as she's collaborating with the writers of both the first *Star Trek* film and the upcoming sequel to ensure authenticity. It'll be interesting to see Krawczyk flex her creative muscles in a wildly different universe.

2 Strange days

Irrational Games' Tim Gerritsen discusses Columbia, clouds, and sociopathic behavior in BioShock Infinite

The demo we've seen of *BioShock Infinite* is intense. Is the pacing and density here indicative of the larger game?

Well, it's hard to show exploration in a demo. Things like wandering through a section and enjoying the *mise en scène*, enjoying what this world is about—that's hard to capture in just 15 minutes. The entire game won't necessarily be that dense...we'd kill ourselves if we tried. But every level will feature sections with that density.

Do we enter the game at the start of the conflict between Columbia's warring factions?

Yeah. Unlike *BioShock*—where you sort of get there after all the events have happened, and you're exploring the environment and the aftermath in a solitary way—this time you're in the thick of things, you're seeing it as it's happening. The Vox Populi have just taken over the Emporia, people are fleeing for their lives. You get to see what happens, you're caught up in this conflict. In the real world, if I'm going down to the supermarket, I don't know what politics everyone in the store has; in our world, there are people just like that who just want to get by. They just want to have their own lives. As you go about this world, you're not gonna be this sort of sociopath that goes around shooting everybody; we're trying to create a verbiage by which you have incentive to look around the world and see how things happen, see how things play out. Because sometimes, if you just pull out a gun...some people are gonna cower, some are gonna run, and some are gonna try to kill you.

From the clouds to the architecture, the sense of "place" in *Infinite* is something special.

Our artists are quite good at building an environment that evokes the theme we're trying to suggest. We sort of define the box from a design standpoint, and the artists bring that box to life. Every day there's something new and exciting that builds upon this core idea we have of this "floating world's fair." The programmers came to us and said, "We can make buildings float, like they're on a cloud." And just like that, the artists came to us and said, "We can make it feel like you're living among the clouds."

Who is Tim Gerritsen?

A games industry veteran, Gerritsen has worked at companies including Sega and Human Head, and is now the director of product development at Irrational Games. A cross between an executive producer and lead manager, Gerritsen explains his role thusly: "Ken [Levine] dreams up the ideas, and I have to figure out how the hell we're gonna do 'em."

PS3

PlayStation®Network

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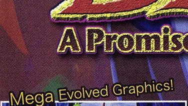

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Massive Monsters Appear!?

204
TOTAL DAMAGE 204

✱Screenshots are not from the final product.

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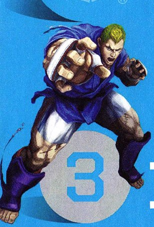
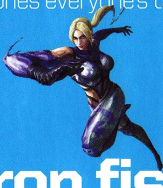
The Big 10

Stories everyone's talking about





3

Iron fisted

Tekken mastermind Katsuhiro Harada talks Street Fighter and the future of his franchise

Yoshinori Ono and the team at Capcom are hard at work on franchise-bending fighter *Street Fighter X Tekken*, but that's only half the story. Katsuhiro Harada and his team at Namco Bandai are busy brewing their own version of crossover magic: *Tekken X Street Fighter*. We sat down to discuss the bizarre situation with Harada.

You've stated that the majority of *Tekken X Street Fighter* development will take place after Capcom's game has been released. Are you planning on working off what Capcom develops?
There is one thing we want to see: obviously they're going to have *Street Fighter* and *Tekken* characters for the first time in the same game, so we are kind of interested to see what the fans have to say about who they like to see, who's popular. So we'll take that into account.

Will your gameplay be in line with a traditional *Tekken* game—with a 3D fighting plane?
Well, actually no. Some of it will be *Tekken*, but since we're having their characters introduced into our series and they have fireballs and the gameplay mechanics are radically different, it's most likely the case that it won't just be a *Tekken* game with *Street Fighter* characters.

Is there a chance we'll see Super moves or anything like that?
Yeah, that sounds interesting—maybe we'll do that.

What aspect of working with the *Street Fighter* universe most excites you?
I've been a fan of the *Street Fighter* series before this ever came about, but I'm probably most looking forward to using Ryu and Ken. In the trailer we saw with Kazuya and Ryu fighting, you can see the fireball from very cinematic angles, whereas *Street Fighter's* pretty much from the side. We could perhaps display that in our game more in 3D and do more cool things with the cinematics there.

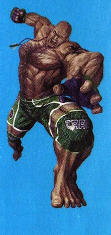
What would the *Tekken* team like to see in Capcom's *Street Fighter X Tekken*?
Since it's 2D and the characters are pretty much illustrations—it would be interesting if they had four characters on the screen at once, maybe not the main mode but some kind of a side mode. They could have something on screen where everything's going crazy—a *Smash Bros.*-type thing with four people controlling would be neat to see.

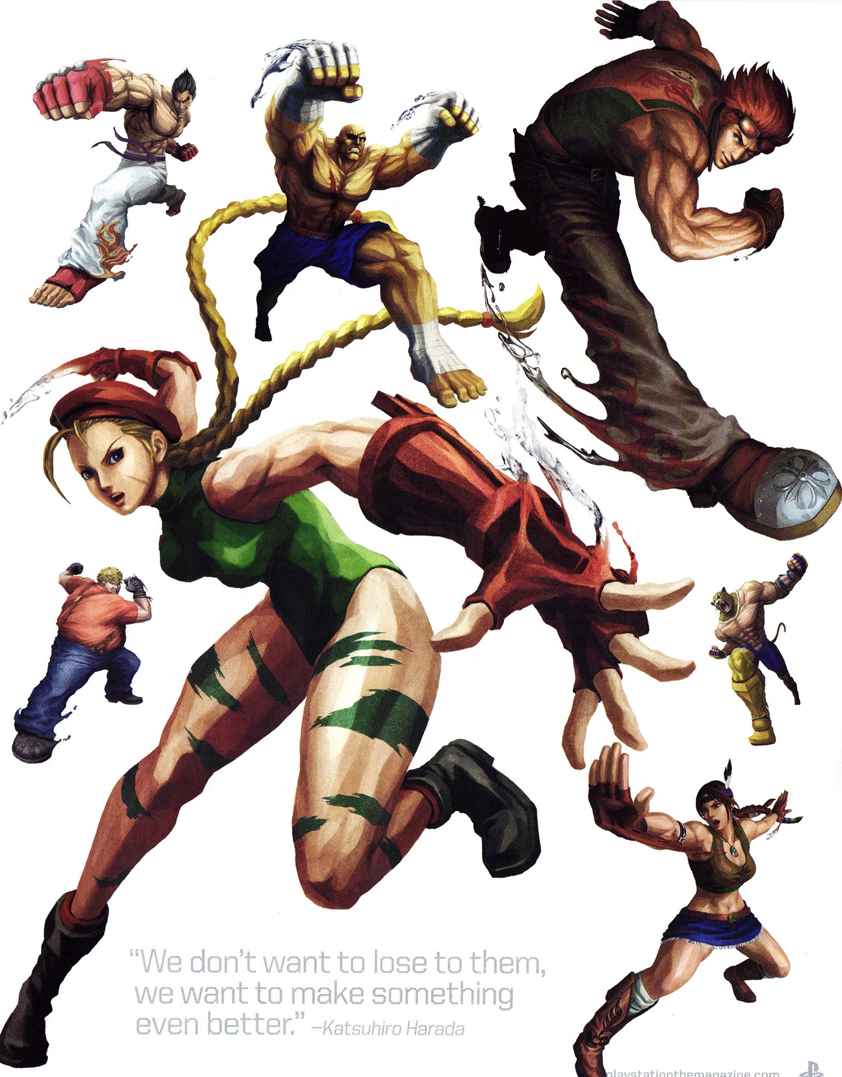
During Capcom's Captivate event, Ono said journalists probably knew more about the project than Namco did. How involved has Namco been in the creation of that game?
It's true. Ono-san brings out a version of his latest work in development to our offices maybe once a month or once every two months. So I only have a short time with it, and then Ono-san takes it with him when he goes. The reason why it's done that way is Capcom—they're very experienced, they've been making games a long time—so if we start trying to tell them how a *Tekken* character should look or how the game should play, that would hamper their creativity. The same goes for us. Ono-san and I have an understanding regarding that.

Is there a friendly rivalry between the *Street Fighter* team and the *Tekken* team? Once the game is completed, are Ono-san and you planning to compete?
When our staff saw their trailer, we thought, "Oh man, that's really cool." But on the flip side, we were also like, "We don't want to lose to them, we want to make something even better." So there is that rivalry there. They probably have some *Tekken* players on their team, some of our people can play a little *Street Fighter*. I've always liked *Street Fighter*, so I can play a bit. I'm very confident I can beat Ono-san at least.

You'll have to do a live stream so we can watch!
[Laughs] Since it's *Street Fighter X Tekken*, and it's basically based on the *Street Fighter* system—the *Tekken* characters, the new characters—I'm not very good at *Tekken* characters in the game yet. I'm better with Ryu and Ken because I'm used to them.

Tag! You're it!
Before *Tekken X Street Fighter* hits consoles here in the U.S., *Tekken Tag Tournament 2* will appear in Japanese arcades. According to Harada, the game is nearly 80 percent complete and is being built around PlayStation hardware despite coming to arcades first. He also stated that the game will be "quite different" from past *Tekkens*, featuring assist attacks a la *Marvel vs. Capcom* as well as the largest *Tekken* roster ever.





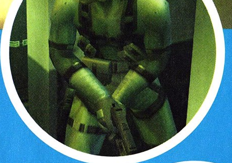
“We don’t want to lose to them, we want to make something even better.” –*Katsuhiro Harada*

4

Solid gold

Konami's greatest hits finally join the HD generation

Sick of digging through drawers, searching for old component cables and long lost game discs, only to discover the games we once loved are now little more than a blurry mess of polygons? Konami's got a solution. With three new high-definition anthologies slated to hit the PS3 in the coming year, a new generation of gamers will soon be able to relive some of PS2's defining experiences.



Collections Collection

Other HD Collections currently in the works:

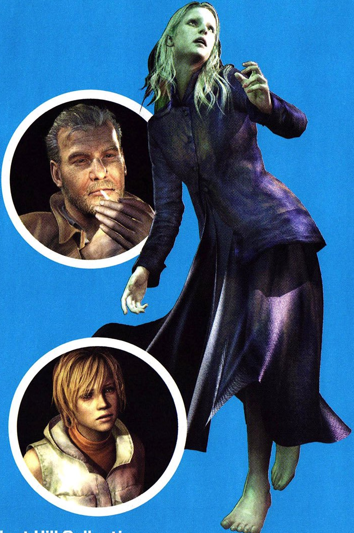
The Ico & Shadow of the Colossus Collection
September release

God of War: Origins Collection
(*Chains of Olympus, Ghost of Sparta*)
September release

Resident Evil Revival Collection
(*Resident Evil 4, Code: Veronica*)
Release TBD

Metal Gear Solid HD Collection

The *Metal Gear* franchise will be bundled into an HD collection including *Metal Gear Solid 2: Sons of Liberty*, *Metal Gear Solid 3: Snake Eater*, and the recent PSP title, *Metal Gear Solid: Peace Walker*. The remastered compendium will be available in November, just in time for Christmas. Because it's only fitting for a *Metal Gear* collection to hide in a box until it's called upon to surprise someone.



Silent Hill Collection

Not to be left out of the Konami lovefest, *Silent Hill Collection* will contain high-definition versions of *Silent Hill 2* and *Silent Hill 3*. Though its rumored fall 2011 release date remains unconfirmed, Konami did announce that the collection is exclusive to PS3. We're buying extra underwear in anticipation of James and Heather fighting their fears in a newly rendered and perhaps even spookier Silent Hill.

Zone of the Enders HD Collection

Zone of the Enders and *Zone of the Enders: The 2nd Runner* are also slated for the HD treatment with an unspecified 2012 release. Though game details have yet to be confirmed, the announcement of Hideo Kojima's "transfarring" system for transferring saves between PS3 and PlayStation Vita hints at a possible application in *Zone of the Enders*.

5

Move to the music

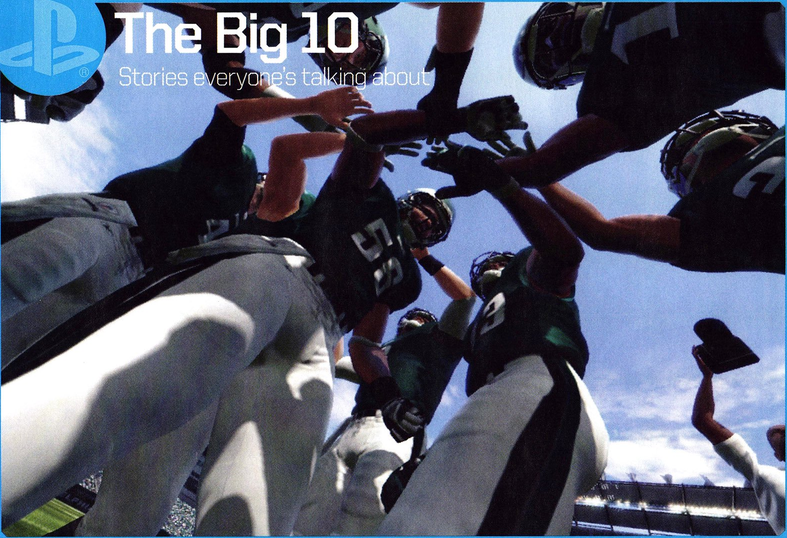
In PixelJunk Lifelike, the PS3 becomes a virtual canvas and music maker

In a darkened room, Japanese artist, musician, and performer Baiyon is standing in front of a TV. He's about to give a game demo. Make that a concert.

He lifts his arm, at the end of which he's holding a Move controller. Colorful circular patterns gently ripple on the TV. Then, it begins. As a techno beat pulsates, the sounds start to layer on top, some notes coalescing into a gentle melodic line, others offering complementary harmonic twinkles and blips. Meanwhile, the screen changes to reflect the music, the colors shifting and new imagery emerging to fit the ever-developing performance. And controlling it all is the man who crafted *PixelJunk Eden's* minimalist backdrops and ambient score, waving his arms like a cross between a crazed orchestra conductor and an animated DJ, putting on a mesmerizing performance unlike anything we've seen, heard, or expected to come from a PS3.

This is *PixelJunk Lifelike*, the latest creation from Dylan Cuthbert's studio, Q-Games. Confused? Don't be. "It's not really a game, so don't expect too much game in it," says Cuthbert. Indeed, he describes this as an "audio-visual composer," which is a perfect way to capture the essence of *Lifelike*. Yes, it's something to play with, but it's not about "playing" in the traditional sense. It is a music maker, complete with visuals. Or, perhaps, it's a virtual canvas that delivers music accompaniment. Whatever the case, it is as much a toy as it is a fully functioning performance tool; in fact, performances can be broadcast live across PlayStation Network. And it is, for some of us, the first true killer app for the Move controller, because it offers something wholly unique rather than a standard game that's been reformatted for motion control.

Although *Lifelike* is uniquely Baiyon in its stylized music and visuals, it also seems to place a lot of creative power right in the player's hands. We can't wait to put on our own performances when *Lifelike* is released on PSN this fall.



6 Ready for primetime

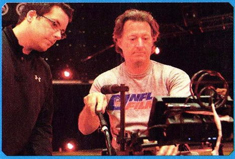
Real NFL Films cameramen transform Madden NFL 12's look

If the intense, in-your-face team run-out shots in *Madden NFL 12* seem pulled right off the handheld camera of a real-life cameraman, that's because they truly are—in a high-tech kind of way. EA Sports brought in a pair of authentic NFL Films camera pros to perform motion capture at EA Canada, and the publisher used its new Virtual Director's Camera Technology to load up in-game scenes and have the cameramen shoot them using specialized steadicams and handheld cameras.

The captured movements are translated one-to-one into the game, resulting in the most fluid, television-like shots ever seen in a sports game. "It just feels like what you see on TV, and these guys are the best in the business," explains Mike Young, *Madden's* art director at EA Tiburon.

It took Young and his team a couple of years to shed the previous code-driven cameras in place of these new motion-captured shots, and the entire design team worked closely with the CBS Sports broadcast team to place virtual cameras in each stadium like those we'd see on any given Sunday. And it's just one of several visual enhancements seen in the game, including unique team run-out routines with mascots and stadium-specific inflatable props like the Viking ship in Minnesota—as well as fresh broadcast-style graphics, revised player proportions, new equipment, and noticeable uniform degradation.

"On this platform cycle, it's definitely the biggest year-over-year set of improvements ever," asserts Young. "Going into the year, we really felt like the game had to be about the core, passionate NFL fans. 'No gimmicks' was the big internal [motto]; let's just do everything the hardcore fan would want."



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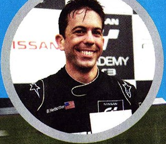
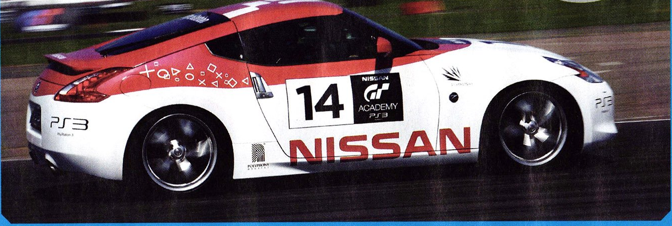
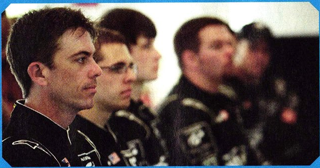
The Big 10

Stories everyone's talking about







Photography: Carter Jung

7

From gamer to racer

Gran Turismo 5 propels GT Academy winner to a new life

Since April 2009, Bryan Heitkotter has been unemployed. Living in Fresno, Calif., Heitkotter used to work for a Toyota dealership, delivering parts. But like millions of Americans, he fell victim to the ailing economy. Heitkotter looked for a new gig but, with soaring unemployment, to no avail. But thanks to *Gran Turismo 5*, his job search is over. Heitkotter's new career? Professional racecar driver.

If that sounds like the twist in a fictional underdog story, it's not. A car guy with an SCCA Solo National autocross championship under his belt, Heitkotter was naturally drawn to *Gran Turismo*. "I played the first *Gran Turismo* at my friend's house and we played all night. I went out and purchased the console and game and have been playing the series ever since," says Heitkotter. So much so, he beat out 53,000 online contestants during the inaugural U.S. GT Academy qualifications to make it to the top 32 semi-finals in Orlando, Fla., this past March. In Orlando, Heitkotter secured a top 16 spot for the finals at England's renowned Silverstone Circuit.

During the weeklong competition at Silverstone, the competitors got behind the wheel of Nissan Leafs, 370Zs, and GT-Rs for a number of real-world driving challenges. For good measure, there were physically demanding open-wheel karts and fitness competitions, shattering any out-of-shape gamer stereotypes. On-hand instructors taught car control, and SPEED Channel documented the action for a GT Academy reality show slated to air in September. Contestants were eliminated throughout the week, with the final four battling ferociously in a wheel-to-wheel race in Nissan 370Zs.

For his victory, Heitkotter will relocate to Silverstone for an intensive seven-month training regimen and make his global debut at the 24H Dubai endurance race next January. Rumor has it that sponsor Nissan will field an all-GT Academy team rounded out with current and past European champions. Humble and genuine, Heitkotter's future looks bright.

"Winning GT Academy's been a validation of a skill that I was unsure of—I wanted to race professionally but I didn't think I'd have the opportunity. Everything's changed and I can't wait to see where my life goes," says Heitkotter. Neither can we.

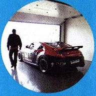
Five GT5 Tips from Heitkotter

Hone your skills for the next GT Academy

1 To minimize understeer, use the least amount of steering input possible in a corner.

2 Analyze every corner. Remember what worked and what didn't, and adapt.

3 Be patient going into slow corners. Entering too fast will end up costing you time.



4 When exiting corners, wait to throttle. If you lift to stay on track, you got on it too early.

5 Instead of racing A.I., join a league or race against a group of friends. Driving with faster people will help you improve.

8

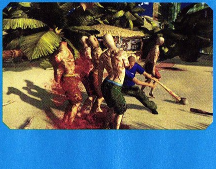
Home of the undead

For the zombies of Dead Island, there's no place like Home

Can't wait until September to play *Dead Island*? Then hop into Home in August, when the undead denizens of Banoi Island pay a little visit to Central Plaza. As part of PlayStation Home's "total game integration" initiative, *Dead Island* will invade Home with a horde of offerings, starting on Aug. 4 when visitors can take a "survivor survey" and win one of eight different virtual T-shirts based on the results. Fans can also watch an exclusive trailer to win an "ultimate survivor" T-shirt.

The following week, those wearing their ultimate survivor T-shirt can take a picture with a caged zombie. (Why? If you saw a zombie in a cage, wouldn't you take a picture with it?) Then, on Aug. 18, the undead will mount a full takeover, completely overrunning Central Plaza, chasing around avatars and causing all manner of mayhem.

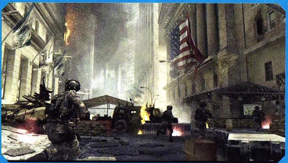
But this Home invasion isn't just window dressing. Once the takeover is in full effect, visitors can unlock new *Dead Island*-related games and activities. Complete them all to earn a premium (and exclusive) reward: Exploding Zombie Bait, a powerful weapon that can be used in the actual game. Fans can also pre-order the game while in Home, and in return they'll nab the premium Exploding Zombie Outfit for their avatar. Additional *Dead Island*-themed items will also be available for purchase, and leaderboards for the *Dead Island* Home challenges will remain in place after the game releases.



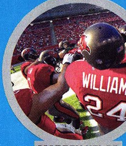
9

The Readers' Most Wanted

E3 is now a distant memory, but the games on show surely had a big impact on this month's list... Wait. Now hang on just a cotton-pickin' second. We're gonna say this real slow, and we're going to do our best to enunciate so y'all understand us real clear: *Where. The. Heck. Is. BioShock. Infinite.* Good list, sure. Great list, even. With one disastrous exception. We better see *BioShock* atop next month's list. It's the right thing to do.



01 *Call of Duty: Modern Warfare 3*
02 *Madden NFL 12*
03 *Final Fantasy XIII-2*
04 *Uncharted 3: Drake's Deception*
05 *Assassin's Creed: Revelations*
06 *Twisted Metal*
07 *Resistance 3*
08 *Final Fantasy XIV*
09 *Batman: Arkham City*
10 *Need for Speed: The Run*
11 *Battlefield 3*
12 *Ratchet & Clank: All 4 One*
13 *Max Payne 3*
14 *Mass Effect 3*
15 *X-Men: Destiny*
16 *Spider-Man: Edge of Time*
17 *The Elder Scrolls V: Skyrim*
18 *The Lord of the Rings: War in the North*
19 *Saints Row 3*
20 *The Ico & Shadow of the Colossus Collection*



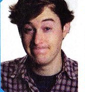
MADDEN NFL 12

FINAL FANTASY XIII-2

Stats in this chart appear courtesy of Ipsos OTX MediaCT's GamePlan Insights. All games are PS3 titles. Polling period was June 12, 2011, to June 25, 2011.

10 Is Assassin's Creed: Revelations overkill?

After four games in four years, one PTOM editor is fed up



Yes

Says the Templar in disguise

Scott Butterworth

First things first: I love *Assassin's Creed*. I've loved it since the first trailer and see no reason to stop loving it now. But franchises I love have a history of being run into the ground (see: *Tony Hawk's Pro Skater* and *Guitar Hero*), so can you really blame me for cringing at the thought of four games in as many years?

Let's examine the series' progression. *Creed II* improved on the original in every conceivable way: the epic story spanned nearly an entire lifetime; the breathtaking open world grew even more massive; and, thanks to dozens of new weapons and enemy types, combat suddenly made sense.

Now, what did *Brotherhood* add? A multiplayer mode that everyone forgot a few months after release? A text-based team management system? A poorly told story with a far less ambitious scope, capped off by the most shameless cliffhanger imaginable? While *Creed II* was a huge step forward for the franchise, *Brotherhood* was an awkward step to the side.

And now we have *Revelations*, which seems to be taking the same approach: a new city, a new story, and a dusting of new toys. Will that be enough for some? Certainly. But personally, I'd prefer to take a break from free running so I can appreciate the next meaningful step in the franchise rather than feeling burnt out on the same old formula.

No

Says the Ezio apologist

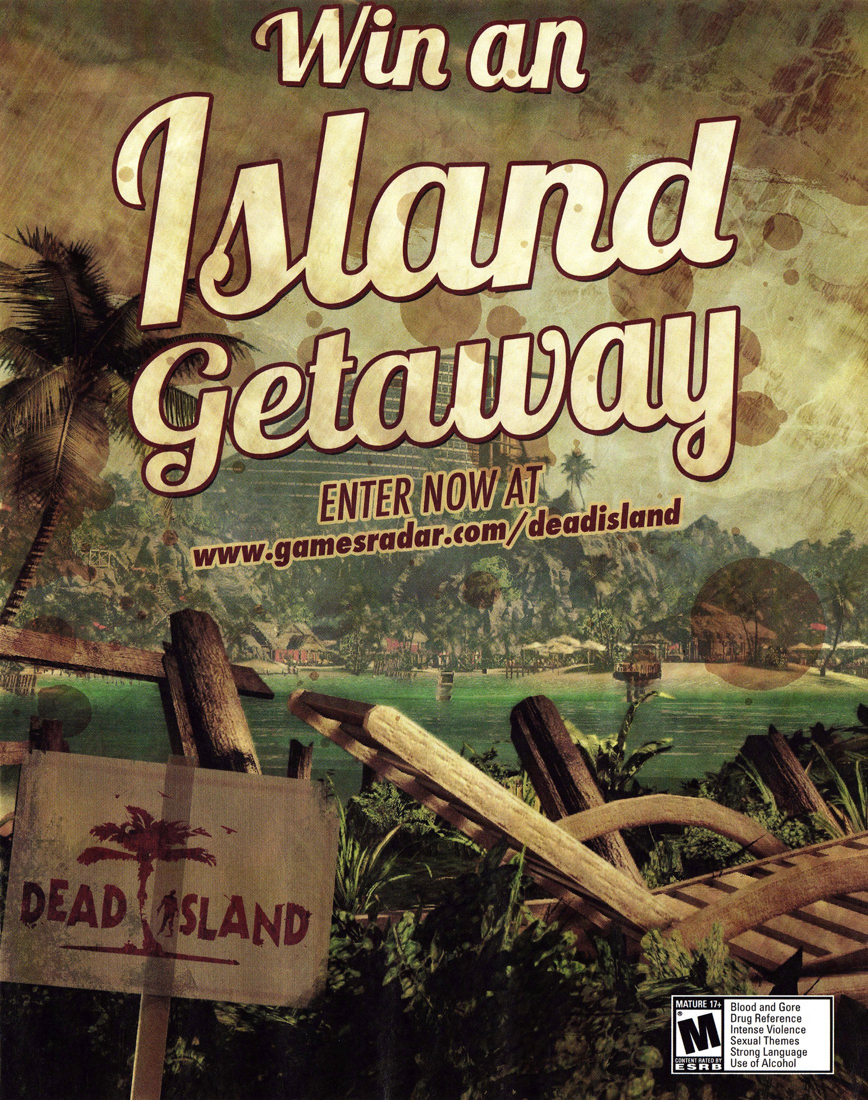
Ryan Taljonick

Look, I get it. Four core *Assassin's Creed* titles, three of which feature our pal Ezio Auditore—another sequel for another year. Do I condone a yearly release schedule? No. But am I excited for a definitive closure to a character I really care about? You bet.

My relationship with *Assassin's Creed* had a rocky start. The original quickly became stale, and despite Altaïr's badassery, he lacked personality. But the great thing about this franchise is that each release brings something new and compelling: *Creed II* was a huge improvement over its predecessor. I was immediately intrigued by Ezio's character, and watched him transform from a Casanova into a hardened assassin. I was there when his family was murdered; as his father and brothers hung lifelessly from a scaffold, his rage became my rage. And the "Ezio's Family" audio track? I still get chills listening to it.

Then came *Brotherhood*, which let us train an *army of assassins*, while presenting a refreshing—and insanely fun—multiplayer mode; I still enjoy a game or two now and then. Yes, I was disappointed by *Brotherhood's* lack of solid narrative—but I'm not giving up on the franchise just yet.

I do fear for what the series will become if it continues down an annual release cycle path, but I still believe *Revelations* has the potential for greatness, just waiting to emerge from the shadows.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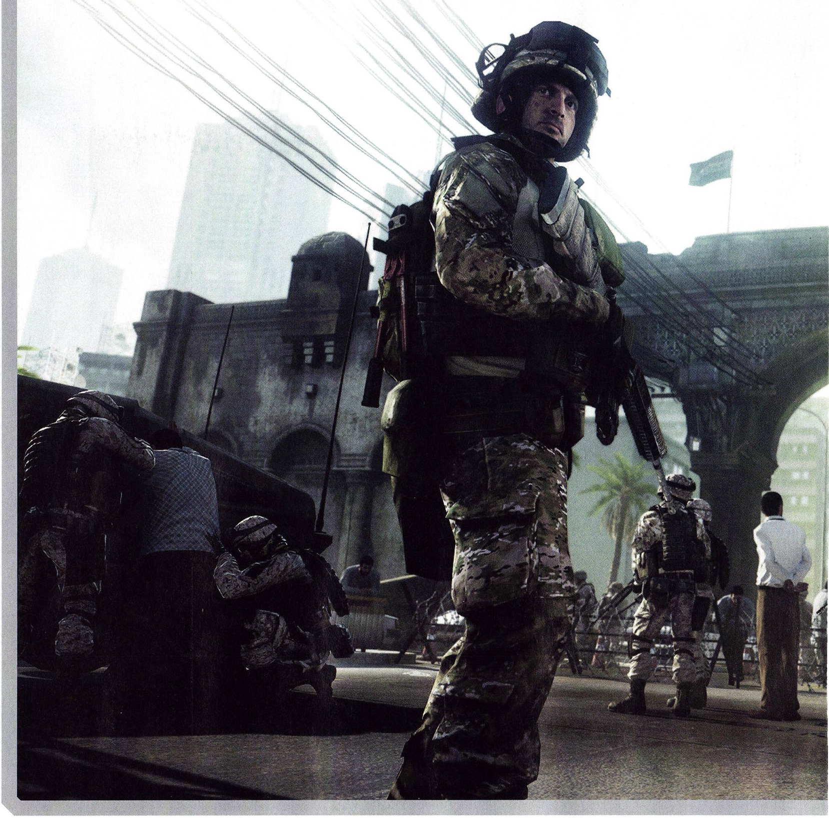
Previews



Quick Pitch

All in One

Red Faction-beating destruction, as handsome as *Killzone 3*, aiming for *Modern Warfare's* smoothness.

Top of the Class

New class structure carves out more useful roles that can be switched between rounds.

Keep Rollin'

New vehicles and vehicle health system round out the battlefield experience.

HANDS-ON Format **PS3** ETA **October** Pub **Electronic Arts** Dev **DICE**

Battlefield 3

Winning the war

Despite sharing similar themes and existing within the same genre, the *Battlefield* and *Call of Duty* franchises are apples and oranges. While *COD* thrives on adrenaline, *Battlefield* is a more considered, sharper, smarter shooter. For many, *Bad Company 2* remains the best online shooter available; its mix of team-based play, pure shooting, vehicle combat, and widespread destruction has enchanted those brave enough to sample it over *COD's* safer, more linear option. In many ways *Battlefield 3's* multiplayer is more of the same. There have been tweaks and improvements to the overall formula and it's all set within a new game engine—Frostbite 2—that makes it look stunning, but the core *Battlefield* experience remains the same.

That being said, our recent hands-on demo did reveal a few intriguing changes, the most significant of which come with the new classes. The traditional Medic is gone; now the Assault class carries all the first-aid gear. The aim is to take the medic's team abilities to the frontline, providing assistance where it's really needed without leaving the class underpowered or slowed by heavy weapons like the M60. There is a trade-off, though. Using the defibrillation paddles now takes a little time—players must hold down the trigger to fire a jolt into a fallen friend—and there's a cool-down period afterward. Oh, and the person being revived has the option to refuse and respawn.

Soldier, MD

So what's replaced the Medic? The Support class—which is essentially the man who carries the big gun. In the demo we played, he was equipped

▲ Urban combat requires innovative tactics: take out the lights and plunge whole corridors into darkness before equipping a rifle-mounted flashlight and using it to blind unwitting enemies.

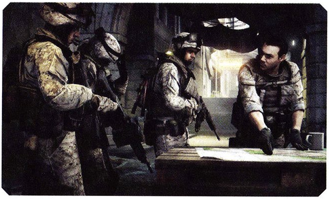
▸▸

Swap between classes on the spawn/respawn screen, so there's no need to back out of a battle to fiddle.

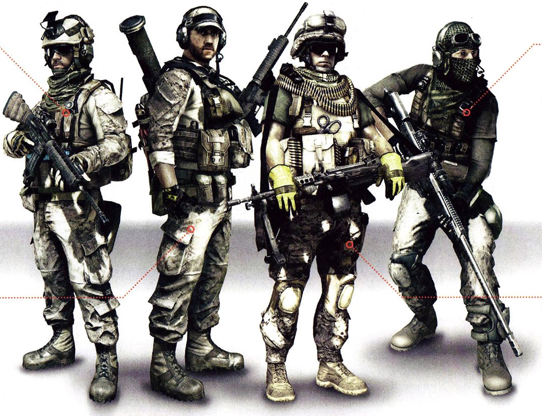
with the M249 Light Machine Gun, a badly named beast of a weapon with its own bipod that deploys when players go prone and hit the aim button. The animation is slick and strangely satisfying—we got distracted mid-fight just playing with it. Support troops are also the kings of the new suppression fire system. Here, if someone is being sprayed with bullets, he'll be under stress, which is evinced with screen shake and blur. It's a relatively subtle effect, but it means if constant fire is battering an opponent, he can't just pop out and fire off a clean headshot...well, not without substantial skill or luck. Players are also rewarded for suppression with XP, adding further tactical depth.

Recons and Engineers remain roughly the same, although each class now has many more customization options. It's all part of DICE's unofficial motto of "Play Your Way": If you want to go pure Assault class by equipping more grenades and body armor, by having red-dot scopes instead of telescopic ones, that's up to you. However, the developers are well aware that excessive customization can lead to the dreaded "superclass," so they're monitoring testing closely.

The destruction isn't just for show. Falling debris can be used to kill enemy soldiers.



Know your soldiers The four multiplayer classes explained



ASSAULT
Typical loadout: M-16A2 rifle, Med Kit, Defibrillators
Best for: Assaulting objectives and providing support for frontline soldiers

RECON
Typical loadout: MKII Sniper Rifle with 6x Scope, C4 Pack
Best for: Providing support from a distance by sniping and spotting enemies

ENGINEER
Typical loadout: M4 Carbine, SMAW Anti-tank Launcher, vehicle repair tool
Best for: Taking out enemy vehicles, blowing holes in cover, repairing friendlies

SUPPORT
Typical loadout: M249 Light Machine Gun, Ammo kit
Best for: Laying down suppressing fire to advance fellow troops

> "The top-mounted machine gun makes a racket like the locks on the doors of judgment day."

Tanks for Nothing

Of course, it wouldn't be a *Battlefield* game without a few new vehicles as well. The LAV-25 is *Battlefield 3's* latest multi-wheeled toy. It's similar to the APCs of *Bad Company 2*, with a beefy driver-controlled cannon, a secondary machine gun mounted on top, and four passenger seats with side-mounted guns. It's a prickly porcupine of death, and rolling in it made us feel powerful in a way no other game quite manages to replicate. The cannon makes satisfying booms, which admittedly sound feeble next to the throaty tank cannons from the single-player game footage shown at E3, while the top-mounted machine gun makes a racket like the locks on the doors of judgment day. Until, that is, an anti-tank missile takes it out.

Vehicle damage works a little differently now, as a tank or APC can be disabled before it's destroyed: it won't move, but the guns still operate. So, hitting the LAV-25 in the side might stop it moving, but it won't kill everyone inside until the enemy finishes it off. DICE hopes the gradual wearing down of the vehicle's abilities will allow passengers more chance to disembark, keeping them alive longer. Ground-based vehicles regenerate health, too, even without the aid of a Repair tool (no word on helicopters or jets), although don't expect them to survive longer under sustained fire.

United We Stand

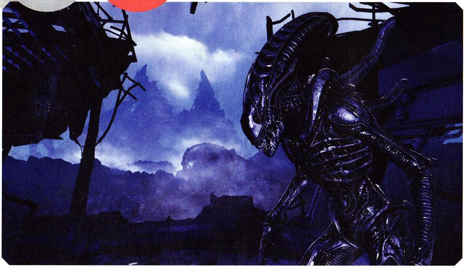
Aside from the multiplayer experience, DICE also revealed a dedicated co-op mode, running over 10 unique maps and supporting two players, pointing to a completely separate campaign. DICE also told us a little about Battlelog, a community/stat service similar to *Need for Speed's* Autolog, which persistently tracks stats and relays updates on what friends are doing. Thankfully, the service will completely be free.

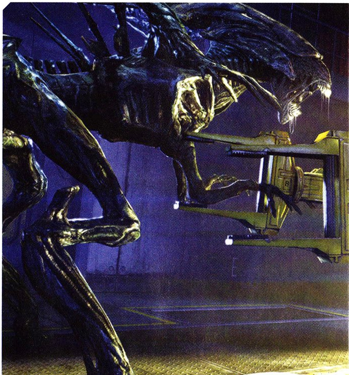
DICE concluded our demo by talking briefly about single-player, but kept plot details to a minimum. The snatches we've seen so far are designed to set the tone rather than give clues about the solo campaign. Given the presence of Russian militants in multiplayer, however, expect more than just a "straight" modern-war story. It all makes *Battlefield 3* one hell of a chunky proposition, and that's how DICE wants it. "If you pay $60 for something, you demand the full package," says executive producer Patrick Bach. "Otherwise you can always buy another game that'll give you more hours of entertainment." JAMES COATES

Dev Talk

"Everyone wants there to be a fight between [*Battlefield* and *Modern Warfare*]. I understand that. But the problem is that if you say it's a 'fight,' you're assuming you're competing at the same sport. We have so many things in our game that aren't a part of *Modern Warfare*, so it comes down to personal preference."

Patrick Bach
Executive Producer





FIRST LOOK Format **PS3** ETA **Spring 2012** Pub **Sega** Dev **Gearbox Software**

Aliens Colonial Marines

Come on, baby, finish what you started

Videogames have been riffing on James Cameron's 1986 film classic *Aliens* for decades, and so it seems only fair that a developer can come out and say as much. "I've been stealing from this movie my entire career," says Gearbox president Randy Pitchford, before demonstrating his studio's newest title, *Aliens: Colonial Marines*. "The pressure comes from the desire to do it really well, and do it justice."

While it's not quite intended to be an interactive version of the movie, it's not straying very far either. Set directly after *Aliens*, the game explores the immediate aftermath: The colony's "atmosphere processor" has been devastated, and planet LV-426 is a dilapidated wasteland. "You're going to go inside Hadley's Hope, you'll board the *Sulaco*, you'll investigate the Derelict," says Pitchford. "You're going to become a colonial marine, and you're going to face hordes of xenomorphs." Pulse rifles, load lifters, and motion trackers all make appearances in our demo, as we move through the ship.

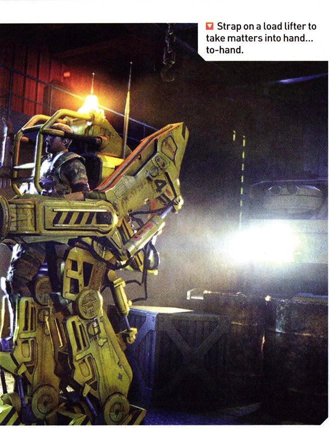
What we witness is a tense, dark first-person shooter, and the experience is brought to life by an assortment of very impressive lighting effects. Shoulder-mounted spotlamps, overhead track lighting, and a number of other ambient sources dot the frame with subtly realistic tones. The game uses the Unreal Engine to push its polys around, but Gearbox created its own proprietary renderer to achieve a distinct *Aliens*-esque look. "It's exclusive to *Marines*," says Pitchford of the tech. "It does real-time dynamic lighting, a dynamic shadow system...everything is incredibly alive, and nothing is baked in." Toward the end of our demo sequence, the power gets cut off and the aliens invade; the flicker of the red emergency lights and the soldiers' weapons bears an uncanny resemblance to events in the film.

Expect much in the way of extreme atmospheric modulation and psyche manipulation: Throughout our demo, *Colonial Marines* shows off a number of well-scripted, harrowing moments, alternating between tense tracking of the aliens with motion sensors, to frantically fighting off ever-increasing hordes. Gearbox has a solid track record of FPS titles, and if the developer can carry the same intensity in our demo to the game writ large, it may just make Mr. Cameron very proud indeed. EVAN SHAMOON

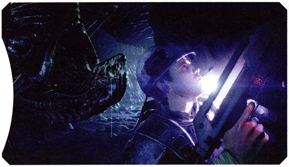
Made for Multiplayer

What we know:
Intended to bring the quintessential *Aliens* squadmates experience to life, *Colonial Marines* will feature four-player, drop-in/drop-out co-op, as well as splitscreen co-op.

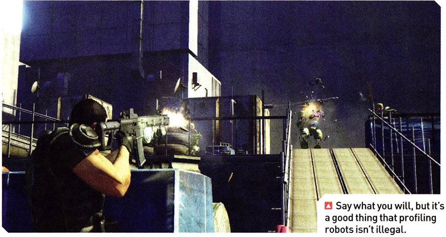
What we hope:
Other multiplayer modes remain under wraps, but please, Gearbox, offer asymmetrical deathmatches pitting outnumbered humans against swarming xenomorphs.



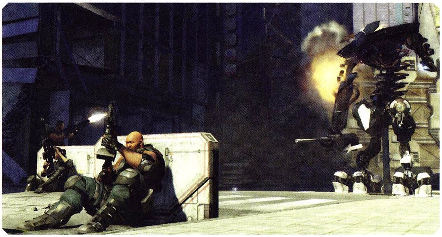
Strap on a load lifter to take matters into hand... to-hand.



We realize that colonial marines are badasses, but we question the tactical wisdom of entering anything that looks like a large intestinal tract. Colonoscopy, anyone?



Say what you will, but it's a good thing that profiling robots isn't illegal.



HANDS-ON Format **PS3** ETA **February 2012** Pub **Sega** Dev **Sega**

Binary Domain

Mechanized masters of our domain

Measure in equal parts *Terminator* movie and PlatinumGames' *Vanquish*, and Sega's intense third-person shooter *Binary Domain* may be the result.

Set in a future Tokyo circa 2080, the new IP from *Yakuza*-series producer Toshihiro Nagoshi revolves around an international special forces squad tasked with combating an onslaught of powerful robot enemies and uncovering a secret threat to mankind. Combat progresses from derelict lower levels to the pristine and beautiful upper reaches of the city. We suspect the level we played during our demo qualifies as a derelict region, but we remain uncertain as the comparative cleanliness of the Japanese make even their slums seem well maintained.

Tasked with seeking out the enemy during our brief deployment, we first selected two team members to form a recon squad. Our female squadmate was suited and equipped for stealthy scouting duties, while the bulging muscles and heavy firepower of our male counterpart suggested a more direct approach to his tactics.

As we ventured through the narrow Tokyo streets and alleyways, it wasn't long before we were embroiled in a full-fledged firefight with robot troops that resembled de-fleshed Series 800 *Terminator* endoskeletons—right down to glowing red eyes. The linear battle required judicious use of cover, but there were sidepaths that could be employed to flank enemies.

Our confrontation culminated against an armored behemoth that measured several stories tall. Small arms and rocket fire had minimal effect, and it was only by scurrying up a stairwell and leaping onto its head that we were able to direct fire at its vulnerable electronic brain and eliminate the threat. **ROGER BURCHILL**

HANDS-ON Format **PS3** ETA **November** Pub **SCEA** Dev **Naughty Dog**

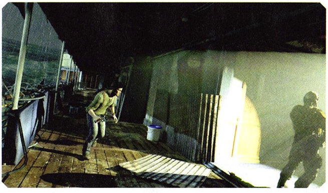
Uncharted 3
Drake's Deception

Prepare to be swept away

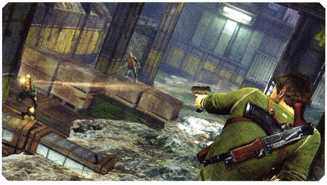
Our latest look at Nathan Drake's struggle for survival takes place on a sinking ship; Nathan sneaks down to the lower cabins, then shoots his way out as the ship begins to sink. At one point, he rips a weapon from an enemy's hands before executing him; in another, he pulls the pin from an enemy's grenade, kicking both away before the ensuing explosion.

It's these ambient details that bring the experience to life. Neither the ship's movement at sea nor Drake's attempts to counterbalance against it are canned animations; rather, the randomly generated waves rock and sway the ship, and everything on board, with unique trajectories.

Another sequence includes Drake and his partner Elena as they attempt to board a cargo plane. As he moves across rooftops, Drake frequently touches the walls and the ground beneath him in an effort to retain his balance. When a searchlight locates him, Drake begins a mad dash to board the taxiing aircraft. Cue Elena in a jeep, and another impressive physics engine demo: Surfing on the jeep's hood, yelling instructions to Elena, Drake leaps to the retracting landing gear, and is swallowed into the belly of the aircraft. **EVAN SHAMOON**



▲ Stealth remains a recommended means of keeping Drake alive, but a heaving ship ups the challenge of navigating and remaining unobserved.



▲ Which is the greater threat? The bullets of armed adversaries or the rapidly rising sea water within the confines of a sinking ship?

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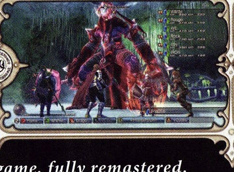

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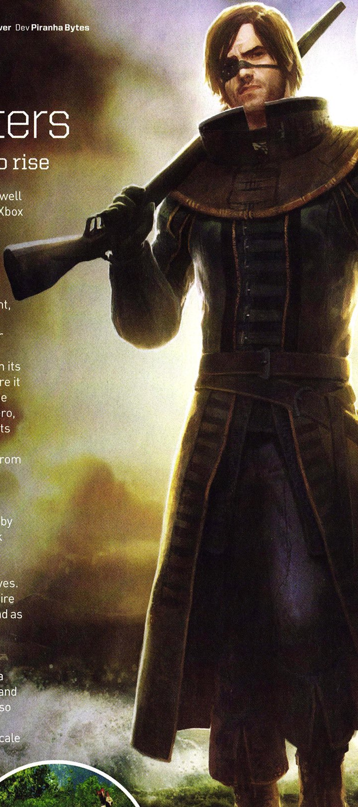
UPDATE Format **PS3** ETA **2012** Pub **Deep Silver** Dev **Piranha Bytes**

Risen 2
Dark Waters

A second chance to rise

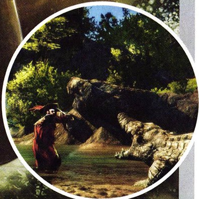


Piranha Bytes knows all too well that *Risen*, the developer's Xbox 360-exclusive fantasy RPG, sucked. The team went so far as to emphasize its gross graphics and weak combat during our demo for *Risen 2: Dark Waters*. Still, they remained lighthearted yet confident, and for good reason.

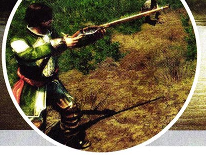
Both the studio's sense of humor and conviction carry over into the sequel, which separates itself from its predecessor without ignoring where it came from. *Dark Waters* is set in the same world and stars the same hero, but the franchise's fantasy elements will be downplayed, making for a much more pirate-focused game from top to bottom. The swashbuckling combat is fast and fluid with well-animated parries, combos, and flourishes. But we're most excited by the dirty tricks that allow us to kick bartenders in the balls, attack enemies with thrown parrots, and even throw sand in our nemesis' eyes.

The nameless hero can also acquire his own ship with a crew to command as he ventures between Caribbean islands—it's a violent world full of sketchy people that need killin'. Terrifying walking cthulu enemies, a drunken mess of a main character, and a search for an old friend's father also ensure that *Dark Waters* will be nowhere as serene as its tropical locale seemingly promises. **MITCH DYER**

Commanding our own pirate ship will be a highlight, but the lack of ship-vs.-ship combat is a potential downer.



Captain Hook isn't the only pirate with a highly *reasonable* fear of alligators.



Period-specific guns should offer an interesting change of pace from our usual diet of automatic weapons.

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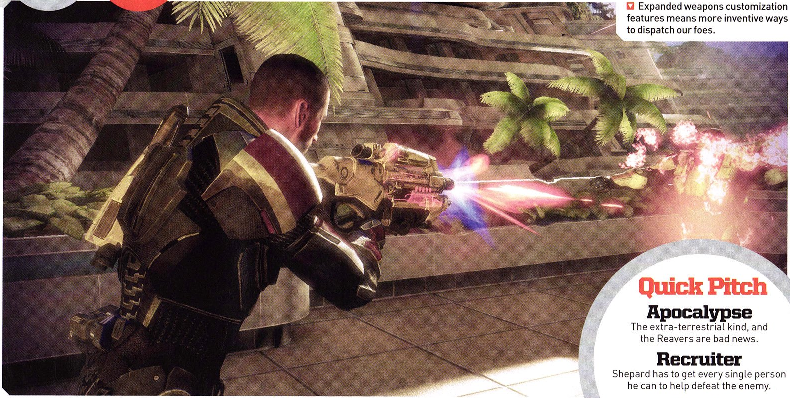


Expanded weapons customization features means more inventive ways to dispatch our foes.

Quick Pitch

Apocalypse
The extra-terrestrial kind, and the Reavers are bad news.

Recruiter
Shepard has to get every single person he can to help defeat the enemy.

Finale
The last act of a trilogy doesn't mean we're guaranteed a happy ending.

UPDATE Format **PS3** ETA **March 2012** Pub **Electronic Arts** Dev **BioWare**

Mass Effect 3

The universe will be saved not with a whimper but with a bang

The Reapers have arrived. We had a chance to see the mechanical alien race begin their semi-millennial evisceration of all life in the universe first-hand, and we liked what we saw.

Mass Effect is back, and the stakes have never been higher. Once again, we're asked to step into the shoes of Commander Shepard, but before we could start saving the universe we needed to escape a planet under siege. As we made our way toward the *Normandy* something caught our eyes: a small child cowering in an air vent. We crouched down to look inside and were offered one of *Effect's* signature dialogue choices. "Let me help you," we said, but the kid scurried away. Did we make the right choice? Should we have been more forceful? Is he going to be all right?

Commander Shepard has always been asked to make the tough choices, and since we've been pulling his strings from the beginning, the decisions have really been our own. Now, two games' worth of choices are coming to a head, and the decisions he'll (and we'll) be forced to make affect not just one person, race, or planet, but the entire galaxy. Luckily, he's prepared to kick alien butt all over the cosmos.

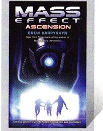
Sure Shots

Mass Effect 2's combat was nearly perfect, but that didn't stop BioWare from looking for ways to improve it. They've upgraded Shepard's arsenal with a number of changes that should help make his job of killing enemies easier. Make no mistake—*Effect 3* is still an RPG at heart, with branching skills, equipable items, and an emphasis on story. But when the bullets start to fly, the RPG shell is shed entirely, replaced with a clean, polished third-person shooter.

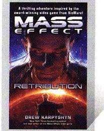
The core of combat hasn't been changed much at all since *Effect 2*, it's just been supplemented. Instead of changing what worked, BioWare added elements to flesh it out, and Shepard has some new tricks up his sleeve—literally—to help him take down his foes. New class-specific weapons, such as the Soldier's Omni-blade (which protrudes from his arm), take down enemies in one hit. On that same note, getting up-close and personal is easier, too, thanks to the improved cover system, which makes for quick transitions between obstacles for better offensive and defensive play.

Melee isn't the only area to get a jump, though. Shepard's ability to upgrade weapons has been expanded to a full-blown customization suite, where we can tweak the individual parts of any gun, giving more control over the tools he takes onto the battlefield. These changes might sound small, but they all help to speed up the gameplay.

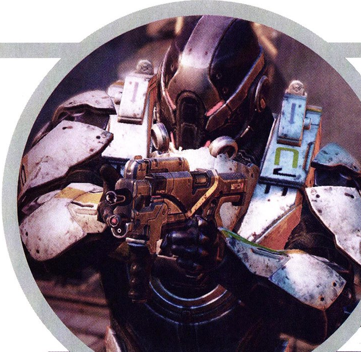
Can't Wait? Read these

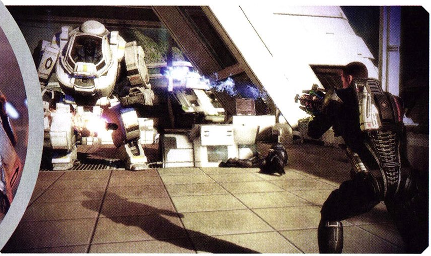


Mass Effect: Ascension
(2008) It doesn't tie directly into the plot, but it does expand the universe.

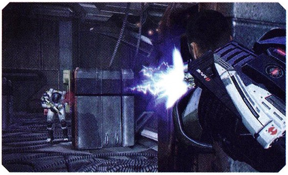


Mass Effect: Retribution
(2010) Learning more about the Illusive Man might help explain his devious motives.





Behold the Cerberus Atlas—sniping the pilot from his throne allows us to hop in this bipedal behemoth and wreak havoc.



When the bullets start to fly, the RPG shell is shed entirely, replaced with a clean, polished third-person shooter.

Beautiful Destruction

BioWare has allowed itself ample time to enhance the presentation, and the result is looking more spectacular than we imagined. The visuals have been improved dramatically, perhaps approaching the heights of what PS3 has to offer. Character models look similar to those found in *Uncharted*, and it appears that some cinematic elements of Naughty Dog's masterpiece have also rubbed off on BioWare. While we don't expect to see Shepard climbing buildings anytime soon, watching them crumble around (and below) him as he fought his way off of Earth was utterly breathtaking, especially when combined with the fluidity of the game's combat.

It's going to take more than a few bullets to save the galaxy, though. As Shepard escaped Earth on the *Normandy*, he promised to travel to other planets and recruit not just other soldiers, but other races to help take down the Reaper threat. As the demo ended we saw the battle for Earth, and it wasn't going well. The child from earlier looked up at us as he escaped: Did our words sway him? Did we convince him to escape? We wonder if we made the right choice, as his ship takes off—and is immediately blown out of the sky.

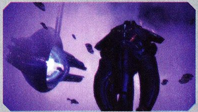
HOLLANDER COOPER

It's Not too Late

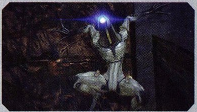
Mass Effect 3 can carry over choices from *ME2* (which featured a digital comic that offered choices from *ME1*). Go back and beat it already!

Enemies Mine The line between friend and foe is rarely clear for Shephard

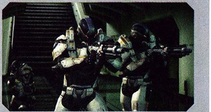
Even in the *Mass Effect* universe, Sun-tzu's words ring true: "Keep your friends close, and your enemies closer." Sure, Shepard has a lot of friends, but for every ally there are a hundred enemies ready to attack.



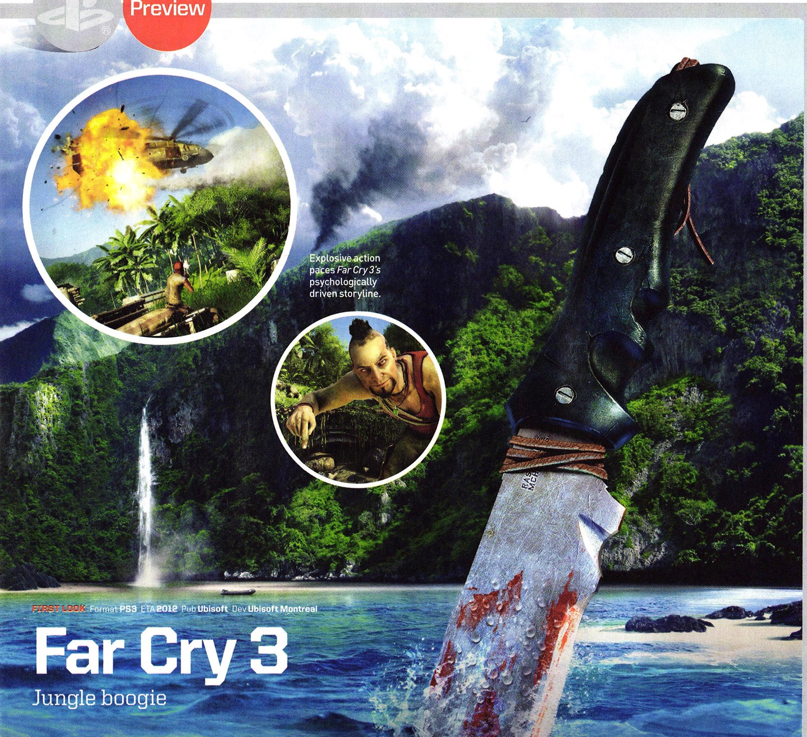
Reavers The giant sentient space ships destroying Earth? They're none too friendly.



Geth Some might be ready to join the good fight, but plenty root for the other team.



Cerberus The Illusive Man is far from an ally, but is Cerberus a true foe?



Explosive action paces *Far Cry 3's* psychologically driven storyline.

FIRST LOOK Format **PS3** ETA **2012** Pub **Ubisoft** Dev **Ubisoft Montreal**

Far Cry 3

Jungle boogie

Surprises are few and far between these days, but Ubisoft unleashed a doozy this year in the form of *Far Cry 3*.

Our demo occurs on a tropical island. Hero Jason Brody is, in fact, no hero at all, but some sort of photojournalist. His girlfriend is missing, his boat's been destroyed, and everybody on the island is batsh–t insane. Where *Far Cry 2* was politically charged, *Far Cry 3*'s themes are far more psychological. "We're taking it down a level, to a human level," says narrative director Jason Vandenberghe. "We're saying: How would you behave if you weren't constrained by civilization?"

Through a camera, Brody initially spies an armed gang as they abuse and execute their prisoners. His photo session is interrupted by a gun-butt smash to his face, however, and he eventually finds himself being dropped into a deep water-filled chasm—with a concrete block tied to his legs. Just before Brody's plunge, the pirates' mohawked leader delivers an extended monologue, and it's a chillingly realistic performance. Even more disturbing, however, is the scene at the bottom of the chasm: littered with other submerged lifeless corpses.

After some crafty underwater maneuvers, Brody breaks free. An attack on the pirates' compound ensues, followed by the hijacking of a helicopter to escape. The sprawl of buildings and foliage provide opportunities for stealth, sniping, and blind-fire attacks; at one point, Brody dives into the water to escape fire, resurfacing behind the enemy. And while stealth played a large role in surviving the assault, the most spectacular moment was a guns-blazing trip down a zip-line to reach the chopper. **EVAN SHAMOON**

Dev Talk

"We give the player clear objectives. You need to get to the helicopter, but between here and there, there's no 'path.' That is for the player to decide."
Jason Vandenberghe
Narrative Director

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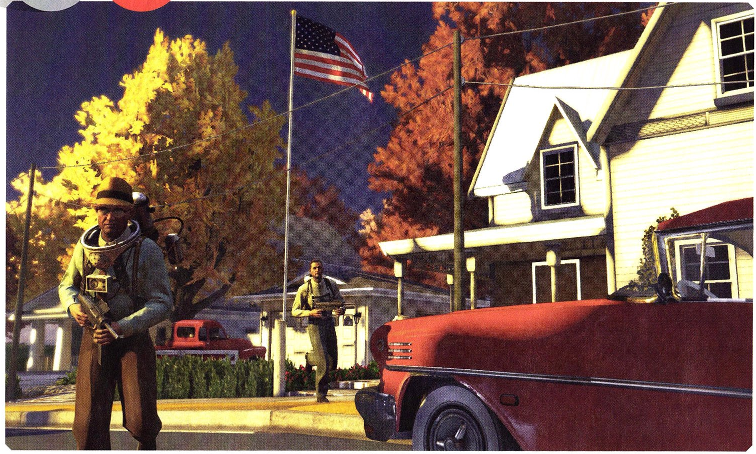


FIRST LOOK Format **PS3** ETA **March 2012** Pub **2K Games** Dev **2K Marin**

XCOM

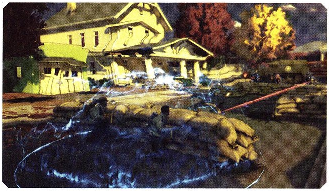
Turn on, take aim, drop alien scum

For the past year 2K Marin has been hard at work revamping *XCOM's* mechanics, creating something more original, more appealing, but in many ways, more reminiscent of the mid-'90s PC game *X-COM*.

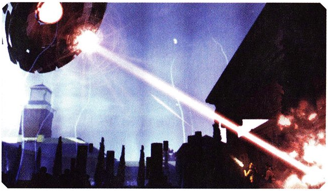
We'll still be first-person shooting at an extraterrestrial threat across '60s suburbia in this former Xbox 360 exclusive, but gone are the blob aliens and disposable teammates. Instead, *XCOM's* Agent Carter is fighting bipedal foes in strategic combat that recalls *Mass Effect's* fighting. Upgradable squadmates can be ordered about the battlefield, employing signature abilities like creating shields, using disruption attacks, and capturing alien tech.

At one point, the aliens dropped a turret in the middle of a suburban street, but instead of destroying the machine, Carter used it to his advantage. He flanked the gun while his team laid down covering fire, inflicting enough damage for his teammate to capture the device. Later he deployed the aliens' own turret against them.

"Every enemy is an opportunity," says creative director Jordan Thomas, explaining that Carter could have returned to base with the captured hardware to conduct research and earn weapons and upgrades—as well as other "long-term benefits." We'll just have to simply focus on blasting aliens until those benefits are revealed. **HOLLANDER COOPER**



▲ The 1960s-style sets *XCOM* apart from other shooters, but it would fit in fine with AMC's winter lineup.



▲ Considering that the aliens are called The Outsiders, we can only hope Ponyboy is among their ranks.

HANDS-ON Format **PS3** ETA **October** Pub **Namco Bandai** Dev **FromSoftware**

Dark Souls

Dying is for winners

Experience has taught us that this Gargoyle boss ain't gonna be easy.

We have very fond memories of crying ourselves to sleep thanks to *Demon's Souls'* unforgiving difficulty. Now, spiritual successor *Dark Souls* once again promises a dangerous world full of monsters aiming to feast on our tears—and feast they shall.

We join the game's detailed, colorful world as the new Pyromancer class, which has a penchant for setting things on fire. After entering a level called Undead Parish, we round a corner and are met by a rather large dragon—it immediately turns us into barbecue. Upon respawning, we notice a few changes in gameplay mechanics.

Demon's Souls' post-death soul form and the Nexus—a hub for leveling and purchasing items—have been removed. Additionally, separate smaller worlds have been replaced by a large, connected one, and we can now use bonfires as portable checkpoints that refill health potions and allow us to invest souls into our character's stats. However, bonfires are limited, and using one can affect our character's humanity—a yet-unexplained element new to *Dark Souls*.

Familiar messages from unknown players litter the ground, warning us of danger ahead; though the devs are tight-lipped about specifics, they promise an expanded multiplayer component. Moments later, we're skewered by a giant armored boar—ah, it hurts so good.

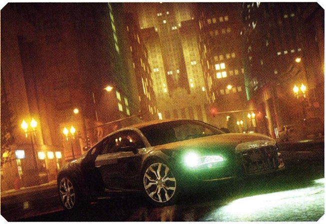
Dark Souls' combat and systems will be familiar to *Demon's Souls* vets, as will the challenging (but rewarding) difficulty. We look forward to testing our tolerance for pain come October 4. **RYAN TALJONICK**

FIRST LOOK Format **PS3** ETA **November** Pub **Electronic Arts** Dev **Black Box Software**

Need for Speed
The Run

No seriously, there's actually running

The illegal, *Cannonball Run*-inspired cross-country street—and sometimes, foot—race stretches from San Francisco to New York.



Expect to see full Autolog integration just as we did in *Hot Pursuit*. Competing against friends has never been easier.

Bullets ricochet off the wet cement. Screaming sirens chase us down the midnight streets of Chicago, steam rises from the gutters as we barrel forward into an uncertain darkness. The engine of our Shelby GT500 howls and churns until, seemingly out of nowhere, a black sedan deliberately blindsides us. As we take off on foot, our cross-country street race starts to seem far less important than merely surviving.

Soon we're running a gauntlet of quick-time events, mashing X to jump between buildings, snag a railing to break our fall, and kick a cop in the gut. It's an odd break in the momentum and certainly a distraction from the intense pursuits and exotic real-world vehicles *Need for Speed* is known for, but we're back in the driver's seat of a stolen cop car soon enough.

Unfortunately, it's not long before a low-flying chopper opens fire, forcing us to dart back and forth to evade its attack and seek the cover of an overpass for protection as we dodge smoldering cars and debris. The forgiving, arcade-style handling makes crazy power slides and last second evasions both simple and exhilarating, and the pulse pounding pursuit of the police makes our escape feel all the more dangerous.

The experience is slightly more linear and less demanding than *Hot Pursuit* (perhaps because we were able to drive more recklessly), but it's also far more cinematic. As an adrenaline-fueled, action-packed thrill ride, *The Run* has serious potential. As an actual driving game? We'll see. **SCOTT BUTTERWORTH**

UPDATE Format **PS3** ETA **2012** Pub **Namco Bandai** Dev **Project Soul**

SoulCalibur V

Rearmed and dangerous

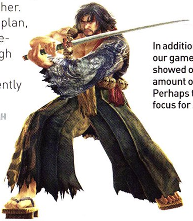
The problem with fighting games these days: not enough weaponry. Well never fear, gamers: With *SoulCalibur* joining the massive genre revival, we'll soon be able smack each other around with oversized battle axes, suspiciously sexy whips, and cheap (but totally awesome) staffs once again.

Set 17 years after the previous game, *SoulCalibur V* features a slew of brand new combatants (nearly half of the game's 20-to-30 character roster will be new) as well as what the developers refer to as an "emotional" storyline that will explain the purpose and origin of all these new faces. While we're not sure exactly what form this story will take, it could potentially resemble something like the single-player campaign from the most recent *Mortal Kombat*.

The roster's not the only facet of the franchise that's receiving a facelift. According to the devs, the gameplay will be "faster, lighter, and more elegant" than ever and will feature dramatic special moves akin to *Street Fighter's* EX specials and Super combos. When we witnessed a few of these maneuvers in action, the screen darkened and the camera zoomed in tight on the action as one character unleashed a stylish flurry of attacks on the other.

It's an ambitious plan, to be sure, but hopefully it will be enough to set *SoulCalibur* apart from it's recently revived peers.

SCOTT BUTTERWORTH



Rumor has it new characters Patroklos and Pyrrah are the son and daughter of the fair-skinned Greek warrior Sophitia.

The only returning characters we've seen so far are samurai warrior Mitsurugi (who's aged noticeably) and German knight Siegfried (who hasn't).

In addition to Super moves, our gameplay demo also showed off an unusual amount of juggling. Perhaps this too is a new focus for *SoulCalibur*.

HANDS-ON Format **PS3** ETA **TBD 2011** Pub **Square Enix** Dev **Square Enix**

Final Fantasy XIII-2

Going where no Final Fantasy has gone before

Imagine our surprise when Motomu Toriyama, project director of *Final Fantasy XIII-2*, told us the news: "I must stress the fact that for the first time in the history of the *Final Fantasy* franchise, *XIII-2* has a multi-ending system." Though he wouldn't divulge any specifics, he assured us players would directly affect the game's outcome.

XIII-2's mood is dark and mysterious, unlike the jaunty transition we saw between *Final Fantasy X* and *X-2*. We are introduced to new playable characters in Serah and Noel, a newcomer to the game, as well as more than 150 monsters that can be captured and slotted as a third party member.

Toriyama explains Noel is unfamiliar with Serah and Lightning's experiences in Cocoon, making him a perfect filter through which new players can experience *XIII-2*. "So if you're a player who hasn't played *XIII* before, you probably can see a lot of yourself in the way Noel is, or the way his perception is. So in that case, Noel helps you, or guides you, through understanding the entire world of *XIII* and *XIII-2*." RYAN TALJONICK

Monster Party

Cerberus
PARADIGM SHIFT

Gotta catch 'em all
We may be in the business of killing monsters, but this time around we can capture and use them as the third wheel in our party. Our paradigm choices determine which monsters can be used in battle, and project producer Yoshinori Kitase says there are more than 150 tamable creatures, some of which require a bit of exploration to find.

Hundred Fists
Tap the button repeatedly!
ACTION

Feral Link
Attacking with a tamed monster fills its Feral Link gauge; once full, we can unleash a powerful special attack—such as the Flanbanero's Hundred Fists ability—by fulfilling onscreen cinematic action prompts (*XIII-2's* quick-time events). We're looking forward to giving our monster foes a taste of their own medicine.

HANDS-ON Format **PS3** ETA **November** Pub **THQ** Dev **Volition**

Saints Row The Third

Our next guilty pleasure

Just when we thought cheeky sandbox shooter *Saints Row: The Third* couldn't get any goofier, the team at Volition upped the ante with a few new toys. These include a pair of oversized gloves called the Apoco-fists that instantly convert the recepient of a punch into a cloud of bloody mist, a vehicle equipped with a giant vacuum and a human canon that allows players to weaponize pedestrians (or themselves), and a special hover jet complete with laser-guided missiles. Because why the hell not? SCOTT BUTTERWORTH

Quick Pitch

Hordes
Once a collection of random co-op missions, Spec Ops is now the horde mode to end all horde modes.

Guns
After some hands-on time, we confirm: this is still the slickest shooter out there.

Drama
Nothing compares to screaming at a friend when we need to be revived.

HANDS-ON Format **PS3** ETA **November** Pub **Activision** Dev **Infinity Ward / Sledgehammer**

Call of Duty Modern Warfare 3

The next wave of Horde mode approaches. Let the onslaught begin.

After nine rounds of attack choppers, armored soldiers, and vicious dogs, we're still standing. Flanked by a pair of carefully positioned auto-turrets and equipped with heavily upgraded weaponry, we stand astride our co-op partner waiting anxiously for the next wave of A.I.-controlled enemies to pour in through the map's many openings like some kind of nerve-wracking terrorist whack-a-mole.

While the *Modern Warfare* games have always been built on the backs of jaw-dropping set pieces—those compelling scripted moments that awe, inspire, and even shock their viewers—none of those static scenes ever felt quite as authentically dramatic as rescuing a fallen friend and surviving just one more round of *Modern Warfare 3's* revamped Spec Ops mode.

Far closer in format to Treyarch's trademark Zombies mode than to the Spec Ops missions found in *Modern Warfare 2*, the new Spec Ops is essentially a cooperative horde mode done in true *Call of Duty* fashion: Two players team up and attempt to outlive an infinite number of enemies that attack in increasingly tenacious waves. By wracking up kills, players also earn points that can be used to purchase additional ammo, better weapons, and various pieces of special equipment—assuming they can reach one of the fixed terminals scattered around each map during the timed intermissions between each round.

Stayin' Alive More horde modes to sample before tackling Spec Ops

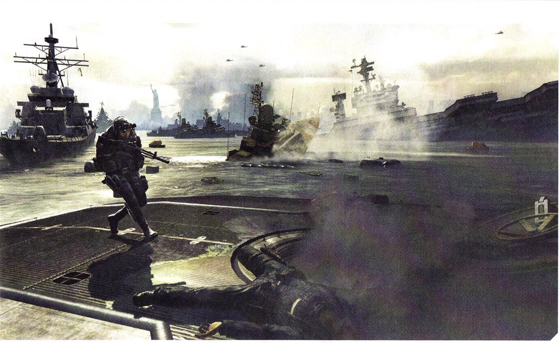
Call of Duty: Black Ops
"Zombies"

Bulletstorm
"Anarchy Mode"

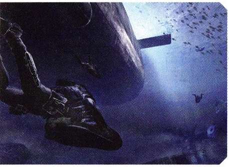
Red Dead Redemption
"Undead Overrun" [DLC]

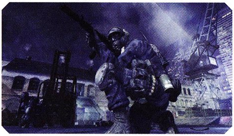
F.E.A.R. 3
"Contractions"

Red Faction: Armageddon
"Infestation"



While the Spec Ops map we experienced was a relatively simple base, we hope other maps might surround us with explosions and set pieces.





"Like some kind of nerve-wracking terrorist whack-a-mole."

Naturally, once a piece of equipment is purchased, it remains active until it's physically destroyed, so tools like turrets and air-dropped A.I. allies carry over between rounds until they're actually eliminated by the enemy. So not only do we have to select our upgrades strategically, we also have to protect our investments, especially if we want to survive into the double-digit rounds.

Bullet Time

During our meaty hands-on opportunity with Spec Ops, we started the first round with little more than a pistol as a posse of shotgun-waving combatants charged our bombed-out desert installation. These guys were easy pickin', of course, and their shotguns made the next round even easier. Gradually, however, enemy soldiers grew more aggressive, and we had to begin pooling points with our partner to acquire helpful gear like automatic rifles and frag grenades—which made the "juggernaut" soldiers we soon encountered far more manageable.

By the time we reached the ninth round, we'd encountered everything from gas grenades to dogs with explosives strapped to their bodies. Of course, we'd also amassed quite a collection of hardware and formed a winning strategy with our co-op buddy. Combined with *Modern Warfare 3's* predictably brilliant core mechanics—fluid movement, slick aiming, powerful weaponry—the new Spec Ops mode proved just as exciting as any lower-Manhattan-leveling single-player mission. SCOTT BUTTERWORTH

Rumor Monger

Who will return in *MW3*?

John "Soap" MacTavish

He may have finished *Modern Warfare 2* a little worse for wear, but the series revolves around Soap.

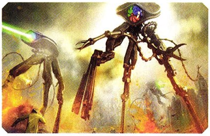
Captain John Price

Price is a similarly integral part of the series. If he can survive a Russian gulag, he can find his way into *MW3*.

Vladimir Makarov

He's been a thorn in our side since the series began, and now it's finally time for some closure... hopefully.

Could Be a Contender



Format **PSN** ETA **Fall** Pub **Paramount Digital**
Dev **Other Ocean**

The War of the Worlds

Neighbors from hell

The premise

H.G. Wells' sci-fi novel (first published in 1898) about a Martian invasion is re-envisioned as a retro-leaning PSN sidescroller narrated by Patrick Stewart.

The reality

The gameplay itself is straightforward—and hardcore. Expect to die, and die a lot, in this old-school and punishing 2D adventure.

The hook

This is a retro game with modern tech. Absolutely nothing here is in 3D, and the character models and animations have been rotoscoped for that classic look. The parallax scrolling looks amazing in action, with over 40 layers comprising each level.

The chances

Survival might be nearly impossible, but resisting this gem would be futile. We expect plenty of near-death experiences as we valiantly struggle to repel the Martians this fall.

FIRST LOOK Format **PS3** ETA **2012** Pub **Ubisoft** Dev **Gearbox Software**

Brothers in Arms Furious 4

We in the killin' Nazi business

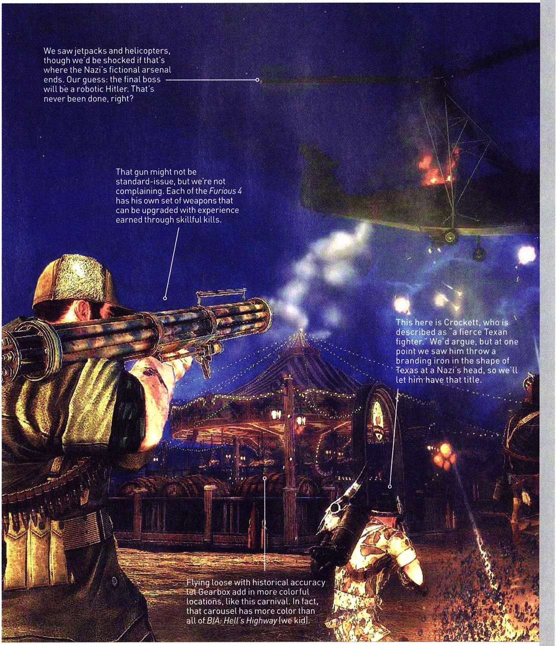
While Gearbox is taking the *Brothers in Arms* franchise in a different direction with *Furious 4*, they're "committed to finishing Matt Baker's story," creative director Mike Neumann said while plunging a chainsaw into the chest of a stylized Nazi soldier. Cartoon quantities of blood splattered on the floor as he whipped out a six-shooter, popping holes in the foes attacking his allies. Seamlessly, he equipped a grenade-enhanced bear trap and tossed it in front of a running enemy. When the squad left the building, another Nazi—this one sporting a jetpack—attacked them, and then they blew up a Ferris wheel.

So, yes, it appears to be a slight departure from the rest of the series.

If it looks like most of what's defined *Brothers in Arms* has been completely scooped out for *Furious 4*, that's because it has. Instead of a gritty war story, the tone is comedic; more in line with *Inglourious Basterds* than *Saving Private Ryan*. Though it's still a first-person shooter, the cautious, cover-driven gameplay has been traded for a run-and-gunner where we're more likely to throw a pickaxe into an enemy's chest than to hide from him.

But *Brothers in Arms'* other tenant, the actual concept of "brothers in arms," has never been stronger. The series' A.I. squads have been replaced with four-man co-op, and Gearbox is filling the game with cinematic moments that take advantage of it, including slow-mo shootouts that we can't wait to play through with friends.

HOLLANDER COOPER



We saw jetpacks and helicopters, though we'd be shocked if that's where the Nazi's fictional arsenal ends. Our guess: the final boss will be a robotic Hitler. That's never been done, right?

That gun might not be standard-issue, but we're not complaining. Each of the *Furious 4* has his own set of weapons that can be upgraded with experience earned through skillful kills.

This here is Crockett, who is described as "a fierce Texan fighter." We'd argue, but at one point we saw him throw a branding iron in the shape of Texas at a Nazi's head, so we'll let him have that title.

Flying loose with historical accuracy let Gearbox add in more colorful locations, like this carnival. In fact, that carousel has more color than all of *BIA: Hell's Highway* (we kid).

Campfire Tales Gearbox's Mike Neumann explains Furious 4's tone

"It's about the stories soldiers tell each other around a camp fire. The legends—the tall tales. How over-the-top those get over time."

We choose our approach: Do we rush in with fists ablaze or go for surprise?

HANDS-ON Format **PS3** ETA **October** Pub **Warner Bros. Interactive Ent.** Dev **Rocksteady Studios**

Batman Arkham City

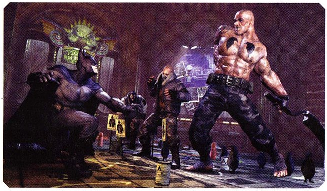
Because the night belongs to Batman

Give Gotham City's most dangerous villains their own crime-filled playground and there are bound to be complications. Luckily, Batman is in the business of solving problems, and our recent playtest showcased some of his new approaches to dealing with Arkham City's thug-inhabited streets.

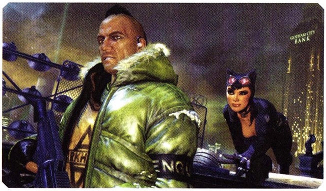
Navigating the city is delightfully fun; Batman's grappling gun allows for easy travel between surfaces, and he can even swing Spider-Man style in some areas. Gliding from rooftops quickly covers a lot of ground, and dive-bombing builds enough momentum to keep us airborne for extended periods of time.

Shortly after touching down in the city streets, we're surrounded by more than 30 criminals. With no time to think, we fluidly dodge attacks while countering with an assortment of powerful backhands and swift kicks to the face. *Arkham City* improves on a familiar formula by including new combos and implementing powerful beatdown attacks—a series of quick punches or kicks that render a villain unconscious. Gadgets like the Batclaw and explosive gel are easily accessed during combat, and smoke pellets enable us to stun particularly dangerous enemies before grappling to safety to reconsider our attack strategy.

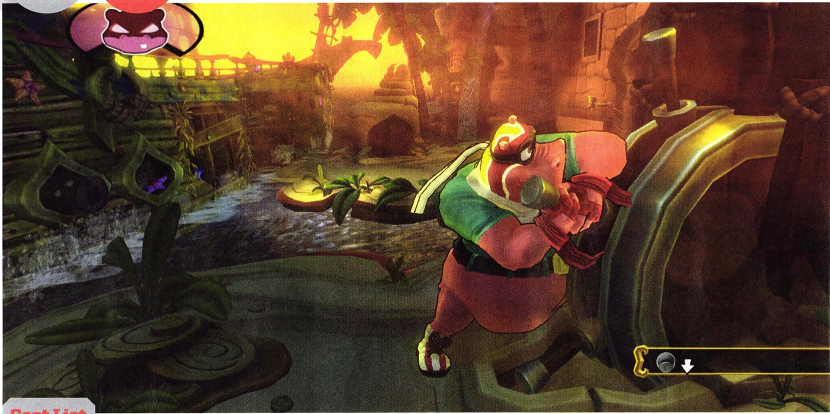
It would appear the streets of Arkham City are in dire need of cleaning—but we're more than willing to serve a heaping pile of justice. RYAN TALJONICK



We expect to face off against many of Batman's legendary villains in Arkham City, including Two-Face, Penguin, and...this guy.



A brief taste of the playable Catwoman missions reveals a complexity that's barely contained by the master thief's slinky, form-fitting suit.



FIRST LOOK Format **PS3** ETA **2012** Pub **SCEA** Dev **Sanzaru Games**

Sly Cooper Thieves in Time

New developer, same classic gameplay

Budge over, Bentley. We're not concerned with portly pink hippos. Rather, it's that enormous pink elephant in the room that has us worried. But not for long.

"I know what you're all thinking: 'Who the hell are you, and where's Sucker Punch?'"

Glen Egan, president of Sanzaru Games, is standing in front of a gathering of games press, about to unveil the fourth game in the beloved *Sly Cooper* franchise. And, as he suggested, we are indeed a bit puzzled at not seeing series creator Sucker Punch. Then again, Sanzaru proved itself to be a capable codeshop with its work on the HD *Sly Collection*, so when they pitched Sony on taking the reins for a true PS3 sequel, Sony not only liked what it saw but was already confident with Sanzaru's work.

They're not the only ones. Within a few seconds of seeing *Thieves* in action, it's apparent that Sanzaru "gets" Sly Cooper. Everything we love about this franchise is intact: tight platforming, character-driven gameplay, those signature thiefy moves, the cel-shaded and vibrant world, the pattern-based bosses—even the voice cast is back.

Set a few years after the third game, *Thieves* stars an older, tougher Sly. Sanzaru has aged the gang, and it shows: Sly is more angular, Murray more muscular. It's these kinds of details that the devs tried to incorporate in this next-gen *Sly Cooper*—more expressive characters who move through worlds that are, at times, double the size of their predecessors.

This ambition was on display in the two levels we saw. We first witnessed Murray wobbling through a dockside area (with one of the most amusing belly-shaking animations ever). When stuck, Murray used his raw strength to turn a crank that only he could handle, creating a pathway that eventually was blocked by whirling blades.

Here, the perspective shifted to Sly, bringing back the familiar stealth-platforming, complete with sparkly ledges and pinpoint platforms. Soon enough, Sly reached a doorway that he couldn't get through—he simply wasn't fast enough. Enter the *Thieves'* newest mechanic: costumes. In every world, Sly will find a new outfit that temporarily changes his moveset. Here, his gypsy-style costume slowed time, allowing Sly to slip through the doorway before it slams shut.

Later we saw a boss battle, in which Sly had a samurai costume that he had to switch on to repel projectiles and protect him from fire attacks. While each world will focus on one costume, Sly can return to previous worlds and use new costumes to gain entry to inaccessible areas—something we'll be sure to do if the game continues to impress as much as it did in this initial showing. GARY STEINMAN

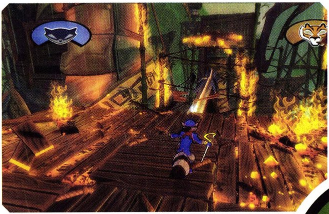
Cast List

The Boss
Sly is the whole package: charm, wit, and skills.

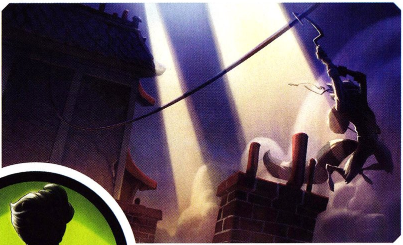
The Brains
Bentley is slow, but he's a steady friend. And smart!

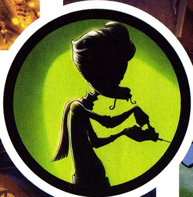
The Brawn
Murray makes up for dim wits with a hippo's strength.

The Beauty
Carmelita was the hunter, but is now the lover. We think.

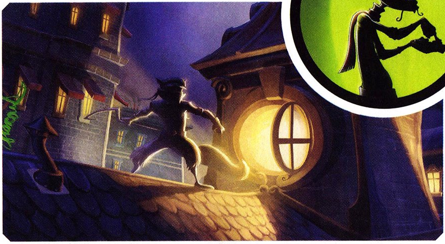


Boss battles are epic and layered, with multiple stages and copious environmental destruction.

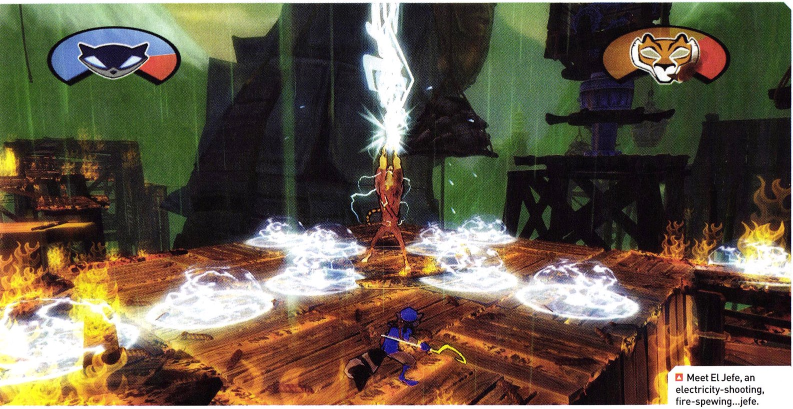




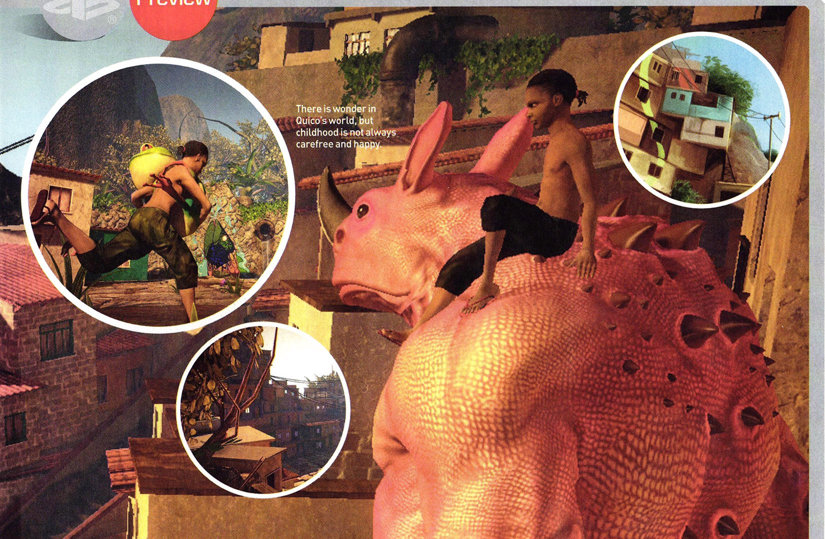
Happily ever after? Not quite. Someone is stealing the pages of Sly Cooper's *Thievius Raccoonus*!



To complete their mission, Sly and gang will travel through time. And across rooftops.



Meet El Jefe, an electricity-shooting, fire-spewing...jefe.



There is wonder in Quico's world, but childhood is not always carefree and happy.

HANDS-ON Format **PSN** ETA **Early 2012** Pub **Minority** Dev **Minority**

Papo & Yo

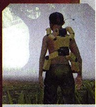
Feeding the pink rhinoceros in the room

There's something more sinister than expected beneath *Papo & Yo's* colorful facade. Vander Caballero, founder of developer Minority, grew up with an alcoholic father. *Papo & Yo* is an allegory of his childhood. In the game, a giant pink rhinoceros-like biped simply named Monster represents dad. Instead of booze, Monster is addicted to frogs that, when consumed, turn him into an uncontrollable fiery beast.

But we're getting ahead of ourselves. *Papo & Yo* is a puzzle/platformer hybrid set in a vibrant South American favela (slum). Our demo had us navigating desolate alleys, following chalk drawings on the walls that led us to deceptively simple puzzles. Most of those we encountered involved our manipulating the environment with often-magical results. Because a majority of the game takes place in the dream world of protagonist Quico (an analog for Caballero himself), little is impossible.

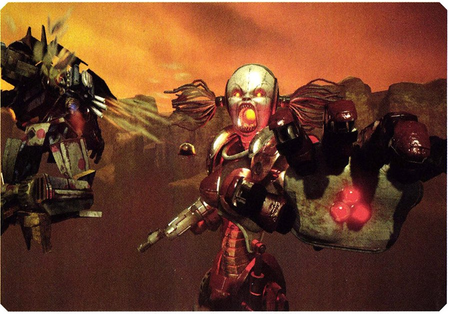
One scene took place atop a building, with a huge gap hindering Quico's progress to the next area. The rooftop was littered with cardboard boxes, and a hopscotch-like grid was drawn in chalk. Each box corresponded to a building on the other side of the gap, and when put into its proper place, the buildings formed a bridge across the chasm. Seeing these buildings move about when Quico lifted a box elicited a sense of wonder we don't often feel in a game. It wasn't too challenging to get the boxes lined up just right, but the puzzle offered a taste of childlike joy and a sense of accomplishment.

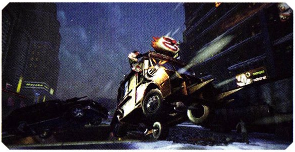
Once in the next area, we encountered Quico's best friend, Monster. This is where it became interesting. In order to pass the area, we had to toss a few frogs at a wall. But instead of Monster going for those distant frogs, he rushed to a pond and gulped a different one down, transforming into a more frightening version of himself. It's here our demo ended, leaving us wondering how we'd manipulate Monster's fury to advance, and where this charming adventure will lead us. **TIMOTHY J. SEPPALA**

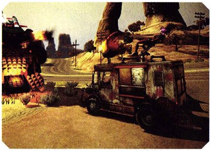


Family

Quico represents Vander Caballero, as Monster does his father, but third cast member Lula is a diminutive yellow robot who can stop Monster in his tracks. "Lula represents my love of games and technology [growing up]," says Caballero.







Sweet Tooth as mech, our psycho ex-girlfriend... This *Twisted Metal* has it all.

HANDS-ON Format **PS3** ETA **October** Pub **SCEA** Dev **Eat Sleep Play**

Twisted Metal

Something Twisted this way comes

Ever since we got our first hands-on taste of *Twisted Metal's* E3 2010 multiplayer demo, we've been dying for another chance to get behind its wheel. Even at that early stage, the PS3 version just felt *right* and hinted at a deep repertoire of vehicle maneuvers and stage secrets.

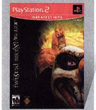
Over a year later, we've gone hands-on against the gargantuan doll-like robot boss known as the Iron Maiden, and like the guided missiles we used to blast away vast portions of her body, the ruthless and relentless gameplay seems locked on target. Earning the nukes required to bring down the massive mech mannequin had us racing through a desert canyon, battling an entourage of heavily armed white limousines, while chasing after a red limo containing the faction leader we needed to capture.

The high-speed vehicular combat action will be familiar to fans of the franchise, but there's layers of depth built into the seemingly straightforward gameplay that will require repetition, multitasking ability, and play-technique development to master. The Iron Maiden boss battle featured more than a half-dozen tiers of escalating engagements to whittle away at the mechanical beastress, which was only made manageable by acquiring weapons and targeting upgrades by playing a minigame—*while we were driving and fighting.*

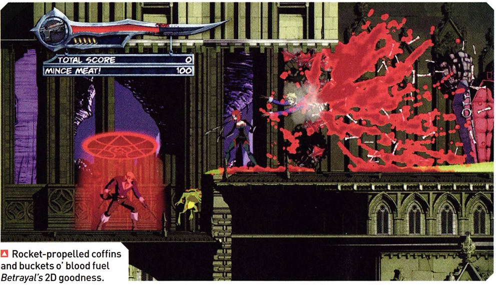
In the end, the break up with our mega-Amazonian dream girl was less than amicable. But strangely, we're looking forward to another date come October. **ROGER BURCHILL**

Can't wait? Play these

Twisted Metal 2
(PSone, 1996)
The sequel's world tour made it a standout on the first-gen console.



Twisted Metal: Black
(PS2, 2001)
The franchise returned to form in its dark PS2 debut.



Rocket-propelled coffins and buckets o' blood fuel *Betrayal's* 2D goodness.

HANDS ON Format **PSN** ETA **Q3** Pub **Majesco**
Dev **WayForward Technologies**

BloodRayne

It's raining blood, hallelujah

From the moment Rayne entered the battlefield in a coffin-shaped rocket ship, we were intrigued. *BloodRayne: Betrayal* presents artsy 2D animation loaded with tongue-in-cheek sidescrolling action. We faced boyish vampires, angry demons, and giant robot crabs, mutilating enemies with flashy melee combos and powerful blasts from our Magnum. Health was replenished by feasting on the jugulars of our foes, and we built up our score as we destroyed everything in sight to the rhythm of the heavy metal riffs oscillating in the background. **RYAN TALJONICK**

Isabelle "Izzy" Sinclair comprises one-quarter of the Overstrike 9 team.

FIRST LOOK Format **PS3** ETA **2012** Pub **Electronic Arts** Dev **Insomniac Games**

Overstrike

Guns, gadgets, and gags

If any developer could bring a ragtag group of misfit spies together to form a charming and hilarious super squad, it's Insomniac. The house that built *Ratchet & Clank* and *Spyro the Dragon* recently debuted its brand new IP *Overstrike*, a gadget-heavy action game likely to feature *Borderlands*-style four-player co-op and enough personality to pass for a Pixar film. Though Insomniac president Ted Price elected not to confirm any gameplay details, an early trailer flaunts everything from cloaking devices to manly facial scars to *Terminator*-esque robots. Expect adventure, intrigue, and plenty of tongue-in-cheek humor when *Overstrike's* true identity is revealed later this year. **SCOTT BUTTERWORTH**

UPDATE Format **PS3** ETA **2012** Pub **Electronic Arts** Dev **EA Canada**

SSX

Coming in from the cold

With the *Deadly Descents* subtitle and hyper-serious tone of *SSX's* original trailer now firmly behind us, our recent trip down the game's backcountry focused entirely on the blissfully over-the-top action of old, which now comes in three distinct forms.

First up: a new approach to the traditional racing format. Four players are dropped at different points on a dormant, snow-capped volcano and speed down toward the mouth, where they finally meet and begin carving their way through a series of

Murphy Pendleton survives a prison bus crash only to wind up in Silent Hill. Out of the frying pan...

HANDS-ON Format **PS3** ETA **October** Pub **Konami** Dev **Vatra Games**

Silent Hill Downpour

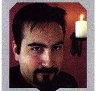
When it rains, it horrors

The room is flooding. Fast. A few more inches and the water level will reach a sparking generator, frying our insides. In a panic, we lunge at the shut-off valve, and just as the water stops gushing, the walls start to melt away. What was once a diner kitchen is now a hellish dungeon: rusted walls, dangling chains, with an endless staircase as our only exit. And soon we'll have to run, chased by an unseen threat, too terrified and overwhelmed to bother wondering what the hell is going on.

It's everything we love about *Silent Hill*. Though our hands-on demo started with an eerie and deliberately paced exploration of a sleepy little town—complete with puzzles and item collection—it quickly (and unexpectedly) devolved into a psychological nightmare. Making use of everything from fixed camera angles to a practically non-existent inventory to the startling chase mechanic first seen in *Silent Hill: Shattered Memories*, *Downpour* clearly plans to put average guy/recently escaped convict Murphy Pendleton through a genuinely horrifying ordeal.

Murphy will be able fight back at points, though. In addition to our jaunt through the diner from hell, we had an opportunity to bash a few anthropomorphic, but otherwise indescribable, monsters using anything we could get our hands on, from chairs to crowbars. The results felt a bit clumsy and slow—like an awkward, backyard-version of *God of War*—but this could have been an intentional attempt to heighten the tension, and there's still time for the developers to fine-tune the mechanics before launch. SCOTT BUTTERWORTH

Dev Talk



"The idea is, generally, if you have one enemy, you can probably kill it pretty easily. But if there's two or three, you're not going to want to fight them unless you absolutely have to."

Brian Gomez
Design Director

tubular caverns. No race gates here, folks, just untamed volcanic speed.

Next came the brand new survival portion, which sets the zoomed-out camera facing our character as an avalanche quickly approaches behind him. While the goal, obviously, is to outrun a snowy, frozen death, our demo-er didn't quite make it. Still, it's an intense addition and just one of nine unique survival challenges.

Finally we got a quick hands-on taste of the main attraction: Trick It. With grind-able chunks of the Great Wall nearby and huge ramps every 20 feet, we had no problem catching massive hang time and throwing down old-school Uber Tricks with style and ease.

While the neon soaked slopes of the seminal PS2 titles may have been sacrificed for a more realistic aesthetic, the *SSX* spirit of reality-defying tricks and racing lives on. SCOTT BUTTERWORTH

Incoming... Payday: The Heist

A four-player cooperative FPS where we get to play as criminals knocking over banks and committing other crimes? We're in. *Payday: The Heist* is flat-out fun, with some ingenious mechanics (like pretending to be customers to find the bank manager) that make it stand out. The combat could use some polishing, but we're interested.

The latest on...

New shots, new games, new info

Res Evil: Operation Raccoon City

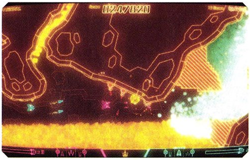
Format **PS3** ETA **Q4** Pub **Capcom** Dev **Slant Six Games**

We've survived zombie infestations, but this is *Resident Evil* like we've never seen it before. *Raccoon City* abandons the series' traditional control scheme in favor of a natural run-and-gun layout that lends itself nicely to the game's hectic squad-based gameplay. To survive these streets (which are infested by zombies, Bio-Organic Weapons, and even U.S. Special Ops forces), we must take advantage of each character's unique playstyle and abilities, including the recently added Lupo, a weapons expert and team leader of the Umbrella Security Service, and Four-Eyes, a field scientist who can manipulate B.O.W.s.

Metro: Last Light

Format **PS3** ETA **February 2012** Pub **THQ** Dev **4A Games**

Human survivors inhabit post-apocalyptic Moscow's underground metro system and fight for their lives against frightening mutants, all while teetering on the brink of civil war. Though predecessor *Metro 2033* never made it to PS3, this sequel brings the atmospheric thrills.



PixelJunk SideScroller

Format **PSN** ETA **Q3** Pub **SCEA** Dev **Q-Games**

A retro-themed 2D shooter, *PixelJunk SideScroller* allows us to blast our way through an onslaught of enemies while dodging bullets and environmental hazards, scoring points, and upgrading our weapons. If insane difficulty is part of the package, we'll party like it's 1979!

UFC Undisputed 3

Format **PS3** ETA **January 2012** Pub **THQ** Dev **Yuke's**

Promising more accessibility than ever before, *UFC Undisputed 3* plans to educate us in the ways of seriously maiming opponents via an in-game advice system and a user-friendly control scheme tailored for new players, while retaining complex gameplay for series veterans.

WWE '12

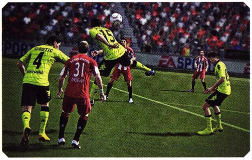
Format **PS3** ETA **November** Pub **THQ** Dev **Yuke's**

WWE '12 has us itching to hit the ring with its refined grappling system (fully mapped to the face buttons) in addition to a limb-targeting feature, which allows us to inflict pain and wear down specific parts of our opponents' bodies before going for the pin.

DmC: Devil May Cry

Format **PS3** ETA **2012** Pub **Capcom** Dev **Ninja Theory**

Sky-high aerial juggle combos, stylish black-and-white slow-mo attacks (complete with Dante's signature white hair), and a couple *Dead Space*-looking monsters make the latest *DmC* trailer look far more promising than Dante's much reviled character redesign.



FIFA 12

Format **PS3** ETA **Fall** Pub **EA Sports** Dev **EA Canada**

A new physics-based Player Impact engine will allow for more realistic and visually exciting collisions while eliminating clipping issues. Skilled players will also exhibit improved close-quarters ball-handling on offense and there are variable tactical options on defense.

NHL 12

Format **PS3** ETA **September** Pub **EA Sports** Dev **EA Canada**

Control freaks can no longer blame losses on the A.I. as live goalies head the refinements to *NHL 12*. Goalies can be directed to play pucks away from the net, shove defenders out of the crease, and most importantly, make the save—they can even participate in fights. Awesome.

NBA 2K12

Format **PS3** ETA **October** Pub **2K Sports** Dev **Visual Concepts**

2K's basketball series has been a dynasty in recent years and *2K12* looks to continue its dominance. Previously excellent player models look noticeably improved and feature more diverse animations, all locked in at 60 fps with months still left until release.

Rune Factory: Tides of Destiny

Format **PS3** ETA **Fall** Pub **Natsume** Dev **Neverland**

Part *Harvest Moon*-style farming simulator, part action-RPG, *Tides of Destiny* isn't on the genre's technical cutting edge. But the adventure featuring hero Aden, his friend Sonja, and the giant golem Ymir offers an unconventional gameplay blend and has a charm all its own.

Gut Reaction

The right and the blight

▲Free Speech

The U.S. Supreme Court ruled 7-2 that videogames are protected speech under the First Amendment. About time!

▲Out of Limbo

Developer Playdead announced its unique puzzle-platformer *Limbo* will come to PSN.

▲3D Ready

A 24-inch 3D TV, a pair of 3D glasses, and *Resistance 3* for $499? Yes, please!

▼Duke Nuked

Duke Nukem's return may have been anxiously awaited, but maybe he should have just stayed home.

▼Dirty 30

Battlefield 3 is getting flak for its 30 fps framerate, but let's not forget: Great things don't always come wrapped in 60 fps packaging.

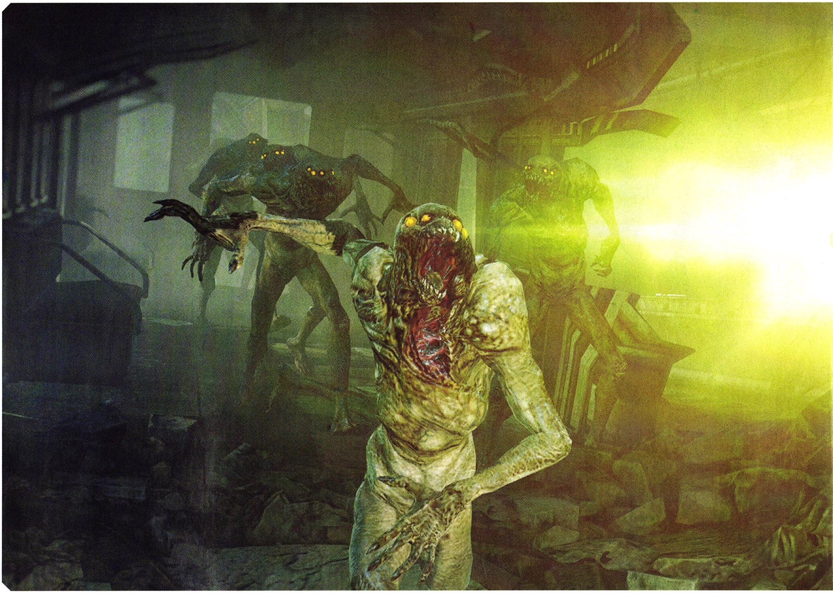
▼Stifling Sequels

Don't get us wrong, we love sequels to our favorite games. But in a year of 3s, we surely wouldn't mind some new IPs.

MANKIND'S LAST STAND

WE LOCK, LOAD, AND LAY WASTE TO UGLY CHIMERAN HORDES IN RESISTANCE 3 INSOMNIAC GAMES' LATEST ENTRY IN ITS SPINE-CHILLING, SCI-FI SHOOTER SERIES

BY MATT CABRAL



As anyone who's faced the virally infected, window-crashing canine from the original *Resident Evil* will tell you, it's never wise to wander near windows when danger may be lurking outside. Apparently, the clueless civilian who gets dragged through a diner's jagged pane early in our *Resistance 3* demo never played Capcom's survival horror classic.

Okay, so maybe the game didn't exist during *Resistance's* alternate-history timeline, but this dude still should've had the common sense not to come in chomping distance of a Chimera, right? Well, not necessarily. You see, *R3* is replacing the franchise's traditional cast of military-minded heroes with scared-silly civilians—frightened folks who are grateful to see another sunrise, nevermind live in a world free from Chimera.

Creative director Marcus Smith, who's grabbed the series reins from Insomniac Games president Ted Price, describes the studio's fresh approach: "What we really wanted to do was focus on an element we hadn't with *R1* and *R2*, which was to take it away from the military focus and bring it back to what people were like during the attack. How did they exist in a world where the Chimera have essentially won? We wanted to give it a more personal feel."

While it doesn't get much more personal than seeing someone shredded by plate-glass shards just before becoming a Chimera chew toy, *R3's* reinvention takes shape long before all hell broke loose in that diner.

Go, Joe!

In the boots of Joseph Capelli, a supporting character from *Resistance 2* who—**spoiler alert!**—ended previous protagonist Nathan Hale's suffering before he was completely consumed by the Chimeran infection, we join the fight four years following the events of the last game. Capelli has settled down in the small town of Haven, Okla., gotten married, and has a young son. Despite this seemingly normal existence, Capelli's life isn't exactly source material for a Norman Rockwell painting. At this point in the *Resistance* timeline, the Chimera have won the war and the 10 percent of the world's population that's managed not to be killed or converted are simply trying to eke out some semblance of a life.

The Chimera might have won the war, but it ain't over till we fire every last bullet, then toss our guns at those stinkin' aliens.

> **"CAPELLI AND HIS MEN WEAR PERMANENT EXPRESSIONS OF FEAR ON THEIR FACES."**

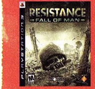
So while Capelli is one of the few, if not the last remaining Sentinel, he's essentially retired from the frontline. He, along with a small band of civilian survivors, would rather flee the Chimeran threat than fight it. The title's opening moments sell this survivalist vibe by presenting emotionally charged imagery evocative of *Homefront* and *Metro 2033*; while those titles didn't fully deliver on their potential, *R3* similarly tugs at the heartstrings. Like those games' underground shelters and makeshift outposts, Capelli's subterranean society is home to playful children who've never known a safe, peaceful life, and terrified adults who worry for their families in a world controlled by a hostile force.

Witnessing tykes snuggling by a fire and an elderly woman knitting a sweater for Capelli's son might evoke emotions previously untouched by the series—but the bone-chilling terror that struck when a panicked woman exclaimed "Oh no, they're here!" felt far more familiar. Capelli and his men, a ragtag group who wear permanent expressions of fear on their faces, navigate a tunnel before reaching the surface to survey the threat. Cutting through an abandoned diner and bowling alley, the group spies fleeting shadows and silhouettes sharply contrasted by the morning sunshine outside. As their hearts and trigger fingers anxiously throb in time, they wait while a Stalker and its flanking Hybrid soldiers march down Main Street.

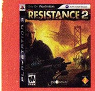
It's around this time a member of the group says, "Looks like they're gone." Not since that crazy old coot claimed the world would end this past May has a statement been so wrong. Soon enough, this overly optimistic observation is followed by the agonizing screams of that one unfortunate soul being sucked through the diner's front window.

A HISTORY OF CHIMERAN VIOLENCE

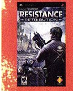
Catch up on the sci-fi series' previous entries



Resistance: Fall of Man
(PS3, 2006)
Released alongside Sony's next-gen hardware, Insomniac's drastic departure from its signature *Ratchet & Clank* series introduced gamers to an alternate-history where World War II was essentially replaced by an alien invasion. Thankfully, we also met Nathan Hale, a brave military man who put a whole bunch of the evil E.T.s in body bags.



Resistance 2
(PS3, 2008)
While helping the Brits thwart the Chimera threat in *Fall of Man*, Hale is infected by the alien virus. *R2* moves the action to North America, and finds Hale fully exploring the super-human perks he's gained through his semi-immunity to the population-wiping infection. Sadly, our hero of two games eventually succumbs to the sickness, setting the stage for Joseph Capelli's leading role in *R3*.

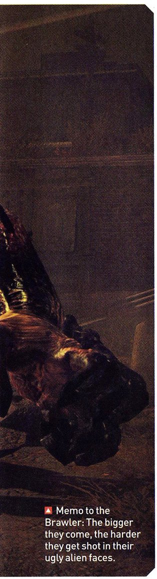


Resistance: Retribution
(PSP, 2009)
More a spin-off than a sequel, Sony Bend's portable entry switches the alien-blasting action to the third-person perspective and introduces new protagonist, James Grayson. A disgraced British Royal Marine, Grayson sets out to avenge his infected brother's death.

“WE’RE FIGHTING FOR THE SURVIVAL OF CAPELLI’S FAMILY AND FRIENDS, RATHER THAN SOME IMPERSONAL OBJECTIVE.”

By preying on our fears and most vulnerable emotions, Insomniac’s upping the dramatic ante in *R3*. They’re not, however, abandoning the franchise’s core concepts and staple elements in favor of soap opera shenanigans. This is still *Resistance* at its Chimera-hating core, so obliterating alien bastards from behind an ass-kicking arsenal of creative killers is still the primary focus. While the demo’s opening minutes effectively dried our throats and moistened our brows, it also made our trigger fingers pretty damn itchy. Because we’re fighting for the very survival of Capelli’s family and friends, rather than some impersonal objective, there’s a renewed urgency behind putting slugs between all three pairs of the relentless extraterrestrial race’s yellow eyes. Thankfully, when the Chimera discovered our American heartland hideout, we re-discovered our ability to put the hurt on them.

In support of steering the franchise in a new direction, which Smith sums up thematically as “heroic survival in a brutal world,” *R3* sees the welcome return of the weapon wheel. Dropped in *R2* in favor of a more realistic—but



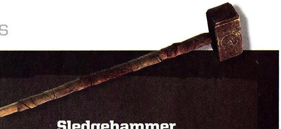
▲ Memo to the Brawler: The bigger they come, the harder they get shot in their ugly alien faces.

SHINY NEW TOYS

Kill Chimera with these four new favorites

Mutator

This aptly named, infection-spraying device showers enemies in a biologically engineered sludge. Its stomach-churning effects include explosive vomiting, erupting cysts and boils, and bloating flesh. Oh, and it also turns its targets into time-bombs.

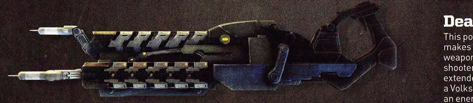


Sledgehammer

While this Chimera-crushing melee weapon may seem better suited to a tool shed than a *Resistance* load-out, give it a swing before passing judgment. Some players might find themselves passing up *R3's* more creative killers once they've sunk this oversized hammer into a Grim's squishy skull.

Deadeye

This powerful sniper rifle makes all other scoped weapons look like pea shooters. Sporting an extended clip, it can leave a Volkswagen-size hole in an enemy's chest. Of course, if a graphic display of fine red mist is preferred, the alternate charge-shot will turn a target's face into puree.



Atomizer

This electricity-spewing behemoth could make *inFamous'* high-voltage hero envious. In addition to shooting shocking blue beams, it can also fire off an orb that sucks in nearby enemies—talk about static electricity!

arguably less fun—two-weapon limit, the on-the-fly arsenal encourages experimentation and creative carnage. Furthermore, the well-armed wheel yields a freedom that complements the throw-everything-you've-got-at-them attitude of the story's desperate freedom fighters. Of course, filling the wheel is half the fun, and we got to brim that baby with plenty of old and new not-so-little friends.

Armed to the Teeth

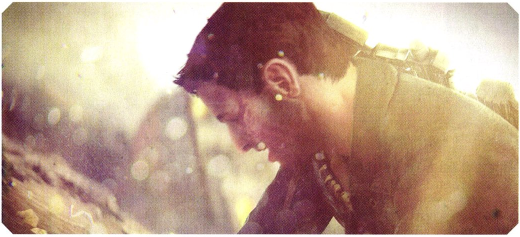
We were reacquainted with the enemy-tagging Bullseye, as well as the Chimera-detonating Magnum, while facing such familiar uglies as Hybrids, Steelheads, Leapers, and Grims. Haven also played host to a Stalker attack; after a pulse-pounding exchange, which saw us taking cover behind a tattered billboard atop a building, we were able to turn the spidery menace into a smoking heap of scrap metal. Longlegs, an aptly named new foe, proved more difficult to pin down thanks to its nimble limbs; still, it takes more than swift acrobatics to escape the Bullseye's unforgiving homing shots.

While these intense exchanges numbed our thumbs and spiked our adrenaline, they didn't prepare us for the Brawler, a brand new breed of Chimeran baddie. The towering, gorilla-like beast barreled into Haven's town center, flaunting its various methods of turning humans into chunky smears. In addition to arm-mounted cannons, the thundering threat packs a charge attack and a pavement-buckling ground pound. Oh yeah, it can also toss cars like empty beer cans. Fighting this Chimeran Donkey Kong called for a combined strategy of evasive maneuvers and firepower; these tactics, coupled with the Brawler's plentiful weak points, ultimately proved its bark was mightier than its bite.

While meeting the Chimera's new friends was a highlight, fighting familiar foes also felt fresh thanks to *R3's* new middle-America setting. Whether stealthily taking out Steelheads in cornfields or exchanging hot lead with Hybrids from behind a tractor, the evocative environments never stopped selling the unsettling aliens-on-our-turf aesthetic. Roadside streams, covered bridges, and old mills also set the stage for against-all-odds firefights that reminded us we were battling in our own backyards. We've seen the U.S. occupied in games before, but there's something about defending the homeland against six-eyed extraterrestrials that really gets the patriotic blood pumping.

Save for the virus-spreading aliens, Haven seemed like a nice place to visit. Sadly, our time there was cut short by the arrival of a Terraformer, which Smith described as a "Chimeran laser beam from space that's come to destroy the town." No disrespect to the game's creative lead, but that definition didn't quite do this cloud-parting bad boy justice. On top of unleashing city-searing beams of terror from the heavens, it also conjures its own weather patterns; as it crept closer to Haven, the town was consumed by a tornado-like force that saw trees and street signs bending to its will, while the air choked on flying dust, dirt, and debris. Before this force of alien technology could swallow the town whole, woman and children—including Capelli's family—were evacuated, while Capelli was convinced by *R2's* returning mad doctor, Fyodor Malikov, to travel to New York to thwart a threat that makes the Terraformer look like a passing thunder cloud.

"Why, yes, my upper thigh is indeed my most vulnerable spot. Now, let's fire together and see who wins this faceoff..."



Insomniac admits *R2* was all about scale; from its screen-eclipsing Leviathan boss battle to its massive online melees, the game's design philosophy—for better or worse—stubbornly stuck to a make-everything-bigger mentality. *R3*, on the other hand, is adopting a more intimate, quality-over-quantity approach. For the single-player campaign, this means merely surviving as a civilian rather than waging all-out war as a super-soldier. In multiplayer, a similar sentiment rings true. Instead of participating in large-scale battles with 50 or so of our closest friends, *R3's* smaller eight-on-eight skirmishes feel far more personal.

Cameron Christian, senior designer and multiplayer lead, elaborates on this scaled-down take: "We really wanted to have a lot more focus on the weapons, the weapon wheel, and, specifically, our new abilities. With that, we can have tighter, more intimate environments, better looking levels, and more back-and-forth, in-your-face battles that really show off our weapons and abilities."

The abilities Christian refers to are new upgradeable active and passive perks that can be purchased with earned XP. The former includes game-changers, such as the Lightning Shield, which gives melee attackers a nice jolt of juice, while the latter grants subtler bonuses such as faster fire rates and an increased blast radius for grenades. Active abilities are also broken into two categories, those that specifically help their owners gain an edge on the battlefield, as well as ones that assist the whole team. For example, while the Doppelganger—an enemy-confusing hologram—is meant for the more single-minded player, a teammate-protecting Bubble Shield or Heal Beacon spreads the love. Other abilities, like the Leaper, which sees its spidery namesake erupt from a fresh corpse, are just plain creepy. More seasoned Chimera-slayers can also mix things up with passive-aggressive perks like one that robs them of their HUD in exchange for a 25-point experience bonus.

PERFECT PAIRINGS

A few of our fave deadly duos

Deadeye + Patience
Do more damage by targeting an enemy for an extended period of time; even better, do it from behind the Deadeye sniper rifle for a one-hit kill.

Ammo Beacon + Wildfire
Rocket launchers generally don't support auto-fire or extended clips, but hanging out with one near an ammo-replenishing station is the next best thing.

Rossmore + Dash
Bum rush a baddie at blink-and-they'll-miss-it speed, then feed them a face full of buckshot.

Wildfire + Demolitions
If the screen-filling explosiveness of a normal rocket-propelled grenade just isn't cutting it, this destructive duo should raise the body count.

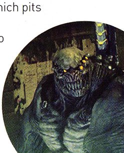
Mutator + Hazmat
Turn enemies into puking, boil-bursting blobs of ugliness, while ensuring you remain infection-free.

> "THEY'RE ALSO REMOVING SOME UNFORGIVING FACTORS; A HEADSHOT WILL BE A RARE AND REWARDING FEAT."

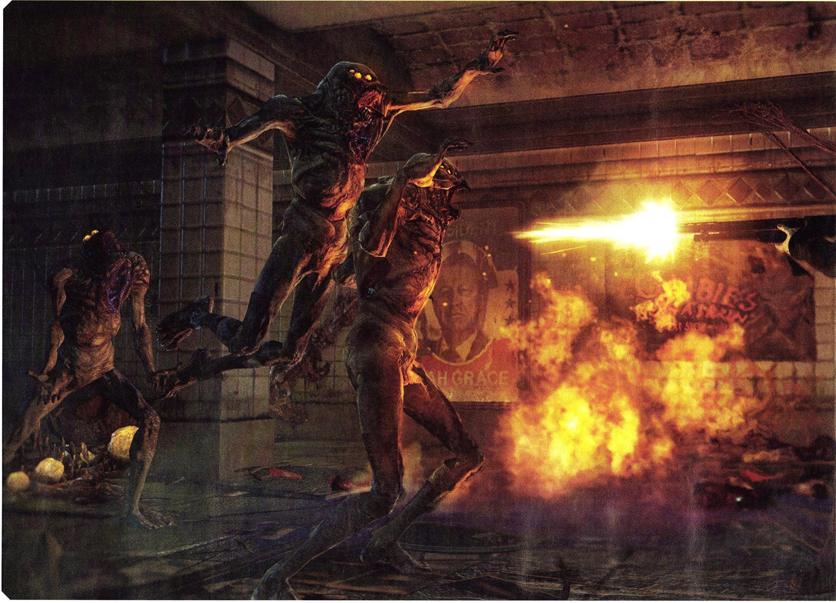
Blood Simple

Loadouts accommodate a weapon and grenade of choice, as well as two active and passive abilities each. *R3* lets players test the waters with a few presets—Sniper, Shotgun, Bullseye, Rifle—before letting the leash off custom loadouts at level five. Once purchased, abilities can also be buffed with two additional upgrades. Because Insomniac really wants us to dive deep into this free-form approach to killing our friends, they're also removing some of the unforgiving factors that keep frustrated newcomers off the online battlefield; scoring a headshot will be a rare and rewarding feat, and the single-player campaign's health-pack-reliant life bar is swapped with a less punishing regenerative system.

In keeping with a philosophy that just wants us to have fun rather than worry where the next brainpan-piercing slug will come from, *R3* is also keeping its maps and modes simple. Playing the new Breach mode, which pits reactor-protecting defenders against attackers, we were able to focus on the objective-based action, while also having a blast discovering new ways to fill body bags. As we made our way across the Trainyard map (defined by a sniper-friendly mix of multistory buildings and lengthy corridors), we especially enjoyed sneaking up on the sharpshooters with the Assassin ability, just before turning them into a bloated, oozing mess of nastiness from behind the plague-spreading Mutator gun.



R3's robust suite of online offerings will include full-campaign co-op (also supported through local spiltscreen), as well as a number of original maps and others inspired by the main campaign's environments. Objective-based challenges will also be complemented by variations on the expected deathmatch and capture-the-flag modes. Online competitors only concerned with ratcheting their headshot count may want to stick to *Call of Duty's* frontlines, but those looking for a more personal touch—as in, blasting away at a buddy while boils erupt all over his body—will want to lock and load for *R3's* more inspired approach to fragging friends and strangers online.



CONTINUED RESISTANCE

Does the franchise have a future?

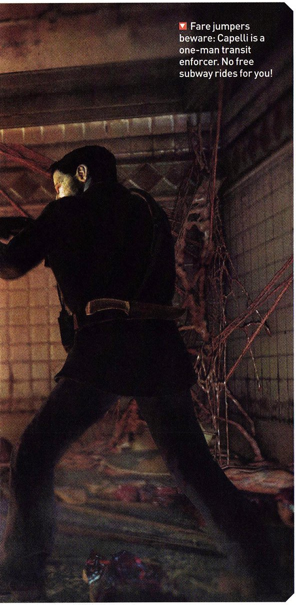
When a book or film franchise reaches its third entry, it often marks the end of a trilogy.

When pressed for details on *Resistance's* future, Insomniac was more evasive than a threatened Longlegs. While revealing *R3* would not end on an *R2*-like cliffhanger, and confirming that they're not currently working on the next game, the team cryptically agreed: "There's a lot of room to grow in the *Resistance* universe." Regardless of Insomniac's plans, Nihilistic Software will be carrying the Chimera-killing torch in a new PS Vita entry.

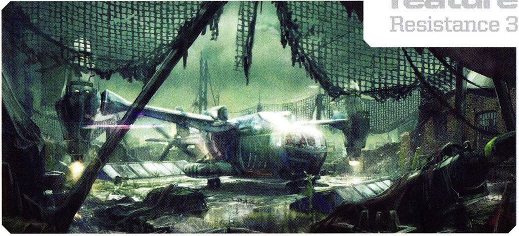
While our extended time with *R3* introduced us to new enemies as well as fresh ways to fill familiar threats full of smoking holes, it only scratched the surface of what the final game has in store for the Chimera-massacring masses. The bulk of our playtest unfolded during early parts of the game, when Capelli's dangerous journey is just being forged. That said, Insomniac did allow us to skip ahead a bit, if only to taunt us with a few teasing tastes of what's to come.

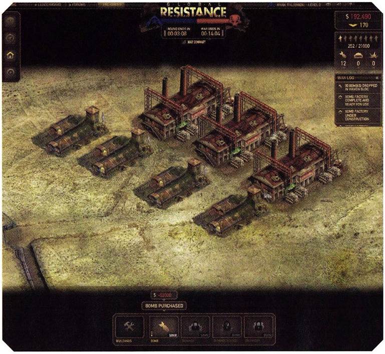
Upon fleeing his hometown, Capelli finds himself a few days later on a boat with Malikov, floating down the Mississippi river. The duo's not exactly kicking back with cold brewskies and fishing poles though; on top of immersive visual cues, like a Kraken-corpse—a nice call-out to one of *R2's* show-stopping bosses—being picked apart by

▲ **The story might be more intimate, but the Chimera will be just as big and beastly as they've been in past outings.**

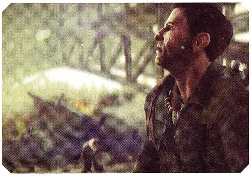


Fare jumpers beware: Capelli is a one-man transit enforcer. No free subway rides for you!





Those craving more universe-expanding action will want to check out *Global Resistance*, a free-to-play, Facebook-like companion game that takes place after the events of *R3*. Those armed with a PSN or Facebook login can head over to Myresistance.net to register and align with either the humans or Chimera and then battle competitors from around the world over specific regions and territories. Success on the virtual battlefield can yield crossover rewards, like MP skin, titles, and XP bonuses in *Resistance 3*; conversely, earning Trophies in *R3* nets resources and XP perks for *Global Resistance*.



"R3 REMINDS US WE'RE NOT JUST GOING THROUGH THE TRIGGER-PULLING PACES."

scavenging Leapers, and a Godzilla-like Goliath toying with a suspension bridge in the distance, this level packs one of the campaign's most thrilling set pieces. We won't ruin all the fun for you, but imagine being trapped on a boat with nothing but the face-ventilating Rossmore shotgun, while a seemingly endless swarm of Grims attacks from all sides. Sneak peaks at later levels revealed a VTOL aircraft flying around the St. Louis Gateway Arch, as well as New York City encapsulated in ice. We even got a glimpse of Capelli, apparently trapped in a Pennsylvania State penitentiary, participating in some bizarre arena-based blood sport against a continuous stream of Chimera.

Survival Instinct

While *R3's* new characters, weapons, enemies, and settings impressed us, it was the subtler elements that really hit us like a Hedgehog grenade. Most notably, the underlying theme of surviving against impossible odds seems to be woven into the experience without being intrusive or preachy. Whether it's a frightened guy in denim overalls fighting on what was probably his property before the Chimeran invasion, or a heartfelt radio message the hard-nosed Capelli leaves for the family he may never see again, *R3* constantly reminds us we're not just going through the trigger-pulling paces. And while narrative and visual tricks effectively sell a cinematic experience Insomniac playfully calls "*The Road* meets *District 9*," it's also organically built into the gameplay. The return of the weapon wheel supports players' survival skills in ways a rigid military loadout never could, and a new reliance on life-revitalizing pick-ups (sorry, regenerating health fans) means hiding behind rocks won't save our sorry asses.

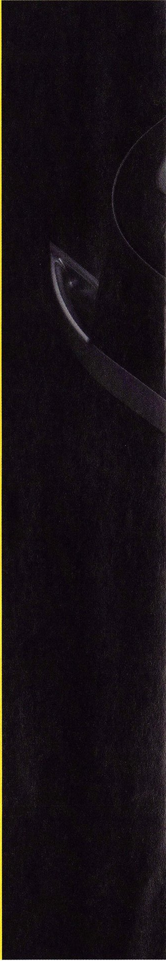
Coupled with the series expected sci-fi spectacle and heart-stopping horror moments, the more personal presentation and survival-minded gameplay could result in the best reason yet to pick up an Auger and pump rounds into those ugly damned aliens.

PSV from A»Z

By Ryan Taljonick

26 reasons to love Sony's new portable PlayStation Vita

It's got games. It's got power. It's got social features that may alter the very way we interact with each other. PlayStation Vita aims to breathe new life into the handheld gaming platform and forever change the way we think about entertainment as consumers—and after intense hands-on sessions and multiple discussions with the masterminds behind Sony's new portable system, we believe PSV will deliver. From precise motion and touch control to an unparalleled launch lineup, there are plenty of reasons to love Vita—but here are 26 that have us anxious for its release later this year.



Sony Computer Entertainment Inc.

A

Augmented reality

Augmented reality utilizes PSV's cameras to incorporate real-world backdrops in AR-compatible games. In *Little Deviants*, for example, the Botz Blast shooter minigame has us gunning at enemies entrenched in our potato chip bag; similarly, *Reality Fighters*—an AR brawler—lets us battle custom-made fighters atop dangerous surfaces...such as our ever-growing pile of bills.

B

Battery life

While specifics on Vita's battery life haven't yet been fully revealed, Sony says the goal is for PSV to compare to the PSP in terms of play length. Naturally, battery time will vary depending on each game's particular graphic intensity, but the fact that PSV nixes spinning media and boasts a potentially power-saving OLED screen bodes well. We suspect play times clock in around four to six hours.

C

Connectivity

Thanks to Vita's cross-platforming capabilities we can play compatible titles on both our PSV and PS3 through cloud-based storage. After a long commute home filled with exploring dungeons and vanquishing foes in the hack-and-slash RPG *Ruin*, we can continue our game on the PS3 within moments of propping up our feet. Whether on the go or on the couch, Vita's got us covered.

D

Dual analog sticks

Perhaps no feature has us more excited than the addition of a second analog stick. Sony assures us the micro-analog design eliminates the PSP stick's notorious "dead zone" and offers a wider range of response. After spending some time with the double-delights, we say these babies are quite comfortable and make us feel right at home.

E

Eyes

The inclusion of both a front and rear-mounted camera is a welcome feature, allowing us to create backdrops for augmented reality games and take all sorts of photos on the go. Though Sony hasn't confirmed video chat capabilities, we wouldn't be surprised if the function is part of the package.

F

Fighters

Sure, dungeon crawlers and shooters are fun, but sometimes we just want to punch people in their faces. Thankfully, a wide array of brawlers will grace PSV's software lineup; from niche favorites like *BlazBlue: Continuum Shift II Plus* to mashups such as *Street Fighter X Tekken*, there's plenty of maiming to go around for both casual and hardcore fighting fans.

G

Gravity Daze

Sporting vibrant cel-shaded visuals, *Gravity Daze* puts us in control of Kat, a teenage girl with the ability to manipulate gravity. Kat can switch to zero gravity mode with a tap of the right shoulder button, which prompts a cursor that we must aim (using Sixaxis motion control) at a surface; returning gravity to normal launches Kat toward the selected location, allowing us to explore otherwise unreachable areas (like the sides of buildings, or even ceilings) as we battle mysterious monsters.

H

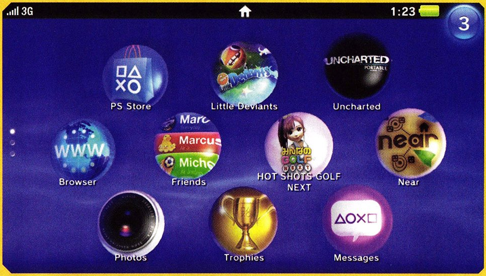
Hot Shots

A PlayStation software lineup wouldn't be complete without a *Hot Shots Golf* title, and the PSV version does a nice job of tapping into the touchscreen and motion controls: We can adjust our shots and character's positioning using the multi-touch display, and traverse the golf course using the Sixaxis' gyros.

I

Interface

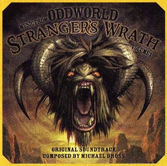
Shedding the ol' XrossMediaBar in favor of a new touch-friendly interface dubbed LiveArea, PSV is all about style and accessibility. A tutorial program called Welcome Park will help us get acquainted with the new interface, which features quick-access buttons for Vita's gaming and social functions, as well as the PlayStation Store and Web browser.



J

Just Add Water

Here's a pleasant surprise: Developer Just Add Water is bringing both *Oddworld: Munch's Oddysee* and *Stranger's Wrath* to Vita, promising cloud saves and cross-play compatibility with PS3. We look forward to revisiting *Oddworld*—a series with PlayStation roots—once again.



K

Killer specs

It's no secret PSV packs some serious hardware; though some information is still tentative at the time of publication, we know Vita will utilize both a quad-core CPU *and* a quad-core graphics processor, establishing itself as a portable powerhouse. Here's a rundown of the known specs:

CPU: ARM Cortex A9 (4 core)
GPU: SGX543MP4+
External dimensions: 182 x 18.6 x 83.5 mm (width x height x depth)
Screen: 5-inch (16:9 aspect ratio), 960x544 resolution, 16 million-color OLED screen
Other: Built-in microphone, speakers, GPS, and Wi-Fi/ Bluetooth support

L

Low price

We no longer have to worry about selling a kidney or *other* services (such as pre-chewing food for old people) to afford this beast of a machine. Vita comes in two flavors: a $249.99 Wi-Fi-only model, or a Wi-Fi/3G-capable device—partnered exclusively with AT&T—for $299.99.

M

ModNation Racers

We loved designing custom *ModNation* tracks on PS3, and Vita's version of this kart-racing gem makes level design even easier. Run a finger along the front or rear touchpads to do everything from laying track to creating mountains or lakes. As an added bonus, each of the two million tracks created by the PS3 *ModNation* community will be playable on Vita on its launch day.

N

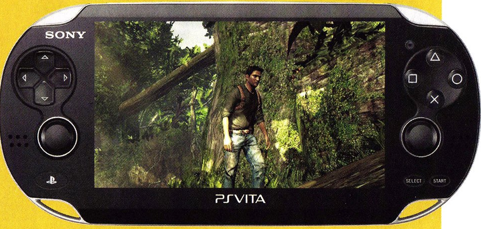
Near

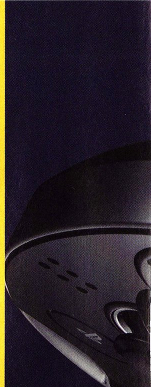
A social networking feature built specifically for Vita, Near utilizes the hardware's built-in GPS capabilities to allow users to see what other PSV owners in the vicinity are playing. Gamers can comment on fellow players' activities, recommend games to one another, and even participate in "gifting," a location-based feature wherein users can share game content by checking in to certain geographic locations.

O

OLED screen

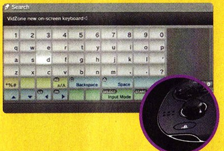
Vita's 5-inch, vibrant Organic Light Emitting Display screen features a 960x544 resolution and is easily the most gorgeous handheld display we've ever seen. The visuals are crisp, and because OLED doesn't rely on backlighting, we hope to save a hefty chunk of battery life in comparison to the PSP's LCD screen.





P Party

A long missing feature from Sony's suite of online connectivity, Party enables us to participate in cross-game (or out of game) voice and text chat with our friends using Vita's built-in microphone or virtual keyboard.



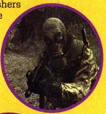
Q Quests

There's something about killing giant monsters and hoarding loot that has us hooked. The PSP saw a slew of niche RPG releases, and we look forward to dungeon crawling on Vita in titles such as *Ruin* and *Monster Hunter Portable 3rd.*

Monster Hunter

R Robust third-party support

More than 80 publishers and developers have pledged to support PSV, which means we can expect a healthy software lineup for the device including heavy-hitting franchises like *Call of Duty* and *BioShock*, and even an unnamed project from Konami's Hideo Kojima.



T Touch capabilities

PSV features not one, but *two* touchpads—both the main OLED screen and the 1:1 rear pad fluidly respond to our fingertips, opening the doors for exciting tactile game mechanics. The most notable example? *LittleBigPlanet.* Sackboy plays much like his PS3 counterpart, but touch controls make gameplay and level creation a breeze: After grabbing a large wheel, we were able to spin it with a swipe of our finger, launching Sackboy to a new platform. Additionally, the level editor can be quickly navigated using the touchpads, and objects can be placed or removed just by tapping our finger on the screen or rear pad. We can't wait to see what other touch-based controls are in store for Vita.

SONY
PS VITA

U Uncharted: Golden Abyss

Nathan Drake's portable debut has us convinced that big adventures aren't confined to the big screen. *Golden Abyss* taps into every aspect of Vita: The game simply looks gorgeous as the jungle setting explodes with vibrant colors. Tapping the touchscreen lets us take out unsuspecting enemies, and we can control our aim with precision using the Sixaxis motion controls.

V Vita

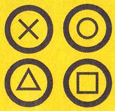
Okay, we admit it: We weren't sold on the name at first. But we're glad it finally *has* a name. PSP2 became NGP became Vita—and ya know what? It's starting to grow on us. PSV has a nice ring to it, and considering all the ways in which Sony's new handheld will become a part of our day-to-day lives, Vita (Latin and Italian for "life") is quite fitting.

W Wipeout 2048

Featuring 10 new tracks, 20 new vehicles, and plenty of futuristic style, *Wipeout 2048* is easily the series' best-looking title and it's built specifically for PSV. As an added bonus, it'll come with *Wipeout HD* tracks so Vita owners can go head-to-head with PS3 *HD* owners.

X X, Circle, Triangle, Square

Sony's sacred geometry has returned; in addition to the four familiar face buttons, Vita also sports two shoulder buttons, a top-located power switch (no more accidentally turning off our handheld!), and a PS button to transports us back to LiveArea.



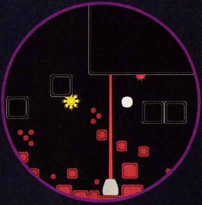
Y Your life

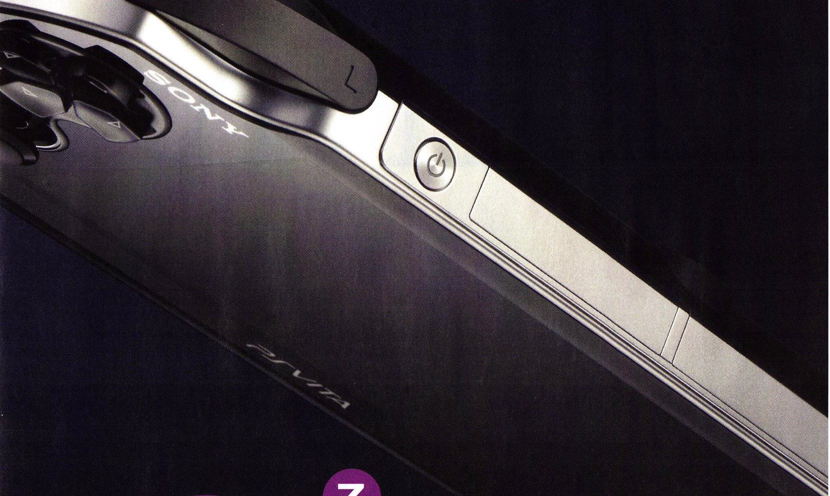
To say Vita will fit into our busy, on-the-go lives is an understatement; it has the potential to become a new media gateway, enabling us to access movies, music, social features, and high-quality games from virtually anywhere.

S

Sound Shapes

We're enamored by this music platformer's simple (yet addictive) design. Musical notes appear as visual pieces of each level (such as traversable blocks or ramps) and touching these environmental elements adds new layers to the level's audio track based on the rhythm of our movements. Additionally, *Sound Shapes'* easy-to-use level designer lets us place level-defining notes of our own (from a large selection of instruments and beats), which can be shared with the community.





Z

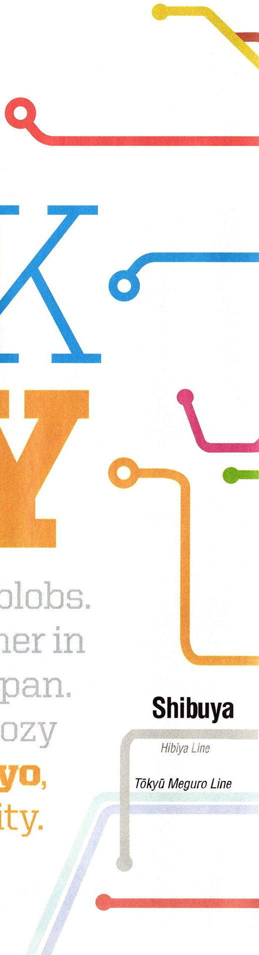
Z-axis

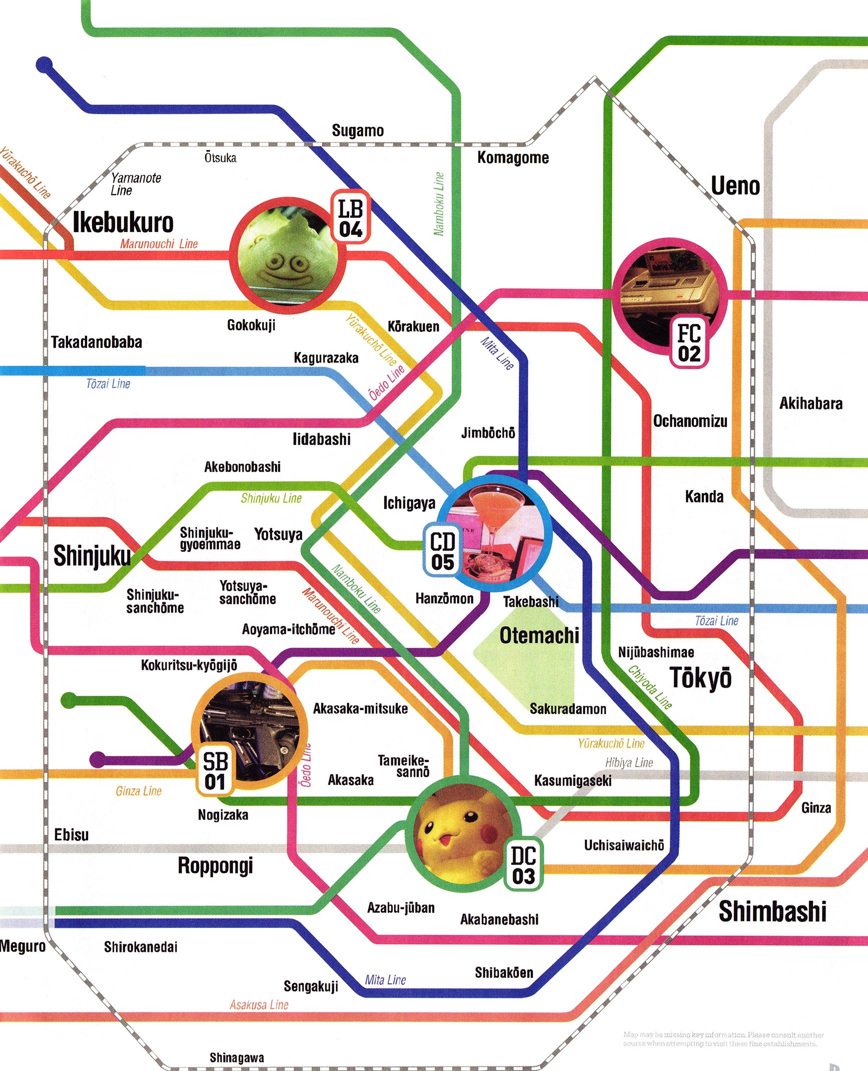
Potentially as accurate as the PlayStation Move, Vita's motion-sensing capabilities are fronted by Sony's Sixaxis gyros in addition to a three-axis compass. The result is an intuitive design that naturally implements motion control without feeling forced. In *Super Stardust Delta*, we can utilize the gyroscope to manipulate the camera; giving Vita a quick shake activates our ultra-powerful Shockwave attack, saving the planet from annihilation.

EAT
DRINK
PLAY

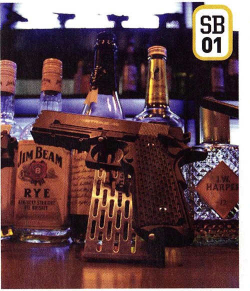
Videogames. Alcohol. Slime blobs. These are rarely seen together in public—unless you live in Japan. Here's a roundup of five boozy game experiences in **Tokyo**, the world's most insane city.

By Daniel Robson


Shibuya
Hibiya Line
Tōkyū Meguro Line


Sugamo
Komagome
Ōtsuka
Yūrakuchō Line
Yamanote Line
Namboku Line
Ueno
Ikebukuro
LB 04
Marunouchi Line
FC 02
Gokokuji
Yūrakuchō Line
Kōrakuen
Takadanobaba
Kagurazaka
Ōedo Line
Mita Line
Tōzai Line
Akihabara
Ochanomizu
Iidabashi
Jimbōchō
Akebonobashi
Kanda
Ichigaya
Shinjuku Line
CD 05
Shinjuku-gyoemmae
Yotsuya
Shinjuku
Shinjuku-sanchōme
Yotsuya-sanchōme
Marunouchi Line
Namboku Line
Hanzōmon
Takebashi
Tōzai Line
Otemachi
Aoyama-itchōme
Nijūbashimae
Kokuritsu-kyōgijō
Chiyoda Line
Tōkyō
Akasaka-mitsuke
Sakuradamon
Yūrakuchō Line
Hibiya Line
SB 01
Ōedo Line
Tameike-sannō
Akasaka
Kasumigaseki
Ginza Line
Ginza
Nogizaka
Ebisu
Uchisaiwaichō
DC 03
Roppongi
Azabu-jūban
Akabanebashi
Shimbashi
Meguro
Shirokanedai
Shibakōen
Sengakuji
Mita Line
Asakusa Line
Shinagawa

Map may be missing key information. Please consult another source when attempting to visit these fine establishments.



SB 01

www.shootingbar-ea.jp | 2F Sawada Bldg., 1-5-5 Gotenyama, Musashino-shi, Tokyo

EA Shooting Bar

EA Shooting Bar is like any normal bar, with drinks, food, and immaculately dressed staff. But...hang on, that waitress has a snub-nose pistol strapped into a holster at the back of her skirt. That's kinda hot.

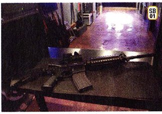
With its 10-meter shooting gallery and a range of authentic replica pistols and rifles, EA Shooting Bar was Capcom's venue of choice to celebrate 15 years of *Resident Evil* (*Biohazard* in Japan). For five weeks in May and June, the bar sported a special "Resi" menu, with a Three Herbs cocktail to wash down tasty Pie-ohazard dinners, as well as a selection of zombie targets for headshotting pleasure.

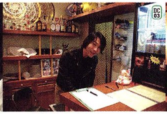
Punters at the bar choose a weapon and target from the menu. Rental of the gas-powered guns is free; just pay for pellets, which run 500 yen ($6) for the first clip and 200 yen after that.

Nice touches included a typewriter at the bar to save drinking progress and an Umbrella-brand painkillers advert in the bathroom for the morning after. Mind you, we hear the side effects are pretty damn severe.

Full recovery

Check out the Three Herbs cocktail: Lemon liqueur base, lime juice, soda water, and a sprig of mint, with three colored powders served on the side, each representing a rejuvenating herb from the *Resident Evil* games. Stir in the blue, red, or green powders and watch the drink change color accordingly. Warning: Excess alcohol can affect aiming prowess.





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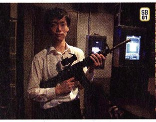

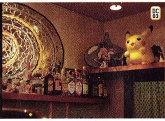

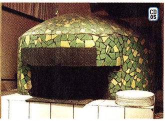

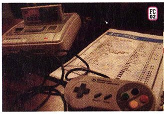

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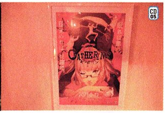


FC 02

www.famicomcity.com | 5F Sigma Bldg., Udagawa 12-12, Shibuya-ku, Tokyo

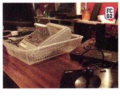
Famicom City

Famicom City caters to gamers with a retro itch. This Shibuya bar has a swollen collection of consoles—NES (Famicom in Japan), SNES, Sega Saturn, PSone, PS2, and so on—and a library of roughly 600 games.

Play as much as desired, swapping games or even consoles for a fixed hourly rate of 1,280 yen ($16), depending on the time of day (or night: It's open till 5 a.m. on weekends). And get this: Soft and alcoholic drinks are included in the price.

The counter has seating for small groups with three flatscreen TVs, perfect for solo gamers or couples on a playdate. Larger groups of up to 10 can settle into screen- and sofa-equipped booths for extended sessions.

Behind the bar: chaos. Consoles and controllers clutter every shelf, and cables snake hazardously along the floor. During our visit, an over-excited customer spilled beer all over a NES. Luckily, its chunky plastic casing and simple chipset makes it practically indestructible. They really don't make 'em like they used to.



Control it!

Famicom City boasts a wide array of accessories, from taiko drums to dance mats, guitars, and multitaps (remember those?). For the closet railway enthusiast there's a copy of train sim *Densha De Go!*, complete with unwieldy cockpit controls. Alternatively, a special "pachi-slo" controller recreates the depressing lows of pachinko (Japanese slot machines).

www.dougenzaka.net | B1F Harvest Bldg., 2-13-5 Dogenzaka, Shibuya-ku, Tokyo

Dogenzaka Cafe

Tokyo's a big city, but most people's homes are tiny. So tiny, in fact, that gamers wanting to engage in same-room multiplayer action often prefer to do it somewhere, *anywhere*, other than inside their shoebox apartment. And that's where Dogenzaka Cafe comes in.

Located at the mouth of Shibuya's seedy Dogenzaka district, this large bar is equipped with all the current-gen consoles, three large flatscreens, and an even larger projector screen. And because four-player *Monster Hunter* linkups are massive in Japan, it also has tables wired with power outlets for gamers to team up, hunker down, and grind away.

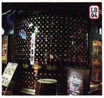
Stuffed Pokémon and Kirby toys decorate the room. The fully licensed bar is well stocked with alcohol, but most of the clientele sup soft drinks. "They can't play properly if they get drunk," laughs bar manager Zenra.

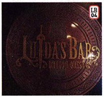
Dogenzaka Cafe hosts all kinds of theme nights, some run by Zenra and others by the bar's customers. The most popular are, of course, the regular *Monster Hunter* marathons, which go on all day and until last call at 11 p.m. or midnight. There are also retro nights and tournaments—since customers or event organizers can bring their own games, pretty much anything goes.

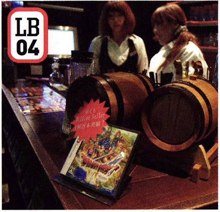
Share the love

Online gaming hasn't really taken off in Japan, where people tend to prefer to play as a team rather than go head to head. Part of the reason the wildly popular PSP *Monster Hunter*'s have sold millions is because of their ad-hoc network mode, allowing players to knock heads in bars like Dogenzaka Cafe rather than down a LAN line.

▲ At Luida's waitresses dressed as medieval wenches serve, among others things, Scorched Great Dragon Jerky.







www.paselabo.tv/luidas_bar | 5-16-3 Roppongi, Minato-ku, Tokyo

Luida's Bar

After an exhausting day of dungeon-crawling and endless grinding, it's good to kick back with a tasty Gigantes leg and a flagon of ale at a cozy local tavern to revitalize HP. Thank goodness for Luida's Bar, a small Roppongi pub fixated on *Dragon Quest*.

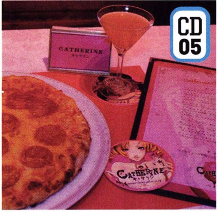
Luida's Bar opened in January 2010 as a promotion for the new Nintendo DS title *Dragon Quest IX* and was originally slated to remain open for just one year. Over 18 months later, this 23-seat bar is still going strong, "leveling up" every few months with new food and drink items and drawing long lines day after day.

Delicacies (priced in gold coins, not yen) include the Mud Hand Keema Curry, Golden Slime Demi-glace Omelet Rice, and Scorched Great Dragon Jerky, while the drink menu includes Meda Panic Ball (sparkling rose wine and jellied tequila), Madantemoon (Sumire liqueur, Cointreau, and lemon juice) and Yaku Soda (collagen jelly with kiwi soda and mint).

The bar is decorated with iconic emblems from the series, as well as model swords, waitresses dressed as medieval serving wenches, and screens running *Dragon Quest IX* footage. It's Wi-Fi ready, so that adventurers play their DS online as they eat. And this being Japan, people actually do.

Slimy snacks

The iconic mascot from the *Dragon Quest* series, Slime (a blob with a smiley face), is splattered all over Luida's Bar. Most notable are the Slime-shaped meat buns, recently joined on the menu by sweet bean-paste buns for dessert. Whichever one you go for, these are without a doubt the cutest treats you'll ever eat.



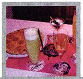
http://r.gnavi.co.jp/e425200 | B1F Ebiya Bldg., 3-1-28 Minami Aoyama, Minato-ku, Tokyo

Collabo Dining

When saucy puzzle game *Catherine* was released in Japan in February, it went straight into the charts at No.1—and it even got its own theme restaurant. For a month and a half, Collabo Dining, a swanky Italian eatery in the heart of Tokyo's upscale Omotosando district, offered a menu of food and cocktails modeled on the game's characters and settings.

Catherine seems to be aimed at the slightly more mature gamer—note its old-school gameplay and the themes of blossoming yet faltering adulthood explored in the story. Atlus was also keen to target young women, which is why it chose to work with for-hire theme restaurant Collabo Dining rather than launch the game in Tokyo's electronics district (read: geek haven) Akihabara.

In the game, Vincent, who's been cheating on his pregnant girlfriend, spends his free time chilling at the Stray Sheep pizzeria and bar, where he and his pals munch slices and swig intoxicants as they discuss Vincent's life and deadly guilt-ridden nightmares. As such, Collabo Dining's house specialty was the Stray Sheep pizza, a margherita with salami and extra cheese. And you know what they say about eating cheese before bedtime, right?



Delicious dames

For its *Catherine* promotion, Collabo Dining created 10 cocktails based on characters from the game. Katherine, Vincent's gloomy long-term girlfriend, was represented by a blend of milk (as pale as her skin) and black Sambuca (as dark as her temper), while the drink named after the mysterious temptress Catherine was sweet and lightheaded.

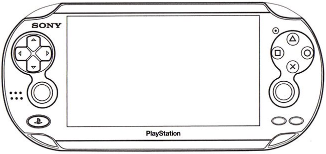
Back In Play

SCE Worldwide Studios president **Shuhei Yoshida** speaks on PlayStation's renewal

E3 2010. Sony was on a roll. After a great press conference and a strong showing at the annual gaming expo, the PS3 finally seemed poised to regain its dominance in this console generation.

Then, it happened. The PlayStation Network was hacked, taken down in a malicious attack aimed at embarrassing the company. And embarrass it did, with Sony being raked over the coals by irate consumers and congressmen who demanded answers.

Flash forward to E3 2011. PSN is back up, and the Welcome Back program has been a big success. Even better, PlayStation Vita proved to the masses it has what it takes to contend in the portable space—at the right price, no less. It was at E3 this past June that we had a rare opportunity to have a candid chat with Sony Computer Entertainment's president of worldwide studios. Here's what he had to say. **INTERVIEW BY GARY STEINMAN**



One of the less reported aspects of the PSN outage is how much this might have affected developers and publishers, especially the smaller independent studios, which are a big part of what makes PSN special. What's being done to rebuild confidence with them?
It's true that some companies totally depend on PSN distribution for revenue of their products. Lots of companies had issues testing and including the network features while the PSN blackout made that unavailable for them. We take it very, very seriously and, as a company, we are speaking to individual companies to see what we can do together to help the situation.

Sony's messaging seems to have changed in the past few years. The focus is back on core gaming experiences, and then everything else radiates out from that. That was the message at last year's E3, and that was the message again at this year's press conference: games come first. Is this a deliberate goal—to try to alter the messaging a little bit and push gaming back to the front and center of the PlayStation?
You might view it that way, but I think the approach we take every time we come to the show is: What is it that we have to showcase and communicate at this time of the year? And of course, this year's major focus at E3 is the proper unveiling of PlayStation Vita. With Vita, what we are trying to do is to really develop compelling games. That's our primary message we want to communicate. And of course, like all the PlayStation platforms, we also have capabilities and entertainment options for Vita users, which we haven't been really speaking of at this moment. But, as the launch nears, we'll be showing more of the non-game entertainment features as well as the social connectivity features that we've been talking about, so that people will see the whole picture of what Vita will offer. But if we try to communicate all its capabilities at one time, it's going to become confusing for people, so we've been primarily focusing on the gaming aspect of Vita. And on the PS3 side, we are so excited about some of the games we are launching this year: *Uncharted 3*, *Resistance 3*, *Twisted Metal*—it just happens that these big games we have for the holidays might appeal more to our core audience.

"With Vita, what we are trying to do is to really develop compelling games."

It's refreshing, at least for our readers, to hear that games, at least in some ways, come first.
We introduced the PlayStation Move last year, and more and more games are taking advantage of what Move can do for each type of game. In order for this new interface to make sense, it really has to enhance gameplay. It has to be something that game developers can believe in. So that's a fundamental philosophy we have for any new peripheral or user interface devices we introduce.

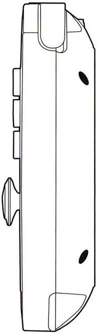
"Lots of companies had issues testing and including the network features while the PSN blackout made that unavailable for them. We take it very, very seriously."

Speaking of Move, we think it's the best motion control device for gaming. But it doesn't seem to have the same mindshare as Kinect. Right now, Kinect is dominating the discussion in the larger gaming sphere. Why is that, and

how important is Move as part of the PlayStation universe?
Move is very, very important, and as I said, there are certain experiences that really make sense and cannot be replicated with conventional controllers like the DualShock. We are trying to strike the balance: What is it about each different input option that's important to consumers. And each developer is evaluating very carefully: Where do they want to spend their development time so that the final product caters to the audience that they want to reach. It would be nice if we could spend hundreds of millions of dollars marketing Move, but we are not just trying to sell plastic. We like to package our products with the proper content and communicate to the proper audience.

So you're willing to commit to Move? And commit to it growing naturally among developers?
Absolutely. It's very exciting to hear developers when they try Move—you heard it from Ken [Levine]. Especially among developers who are accustomed to providing core games, they have a natural tendency or skepticism to new types of interfaces. I totally understand as a gamer myself—we've been playing games for over 15 years and suddenly we don't want to abandon what we can do so well, so it has to be really compelling. What we have found, and what developers are finding with PS Move, is adaptation of Move can eliminate some of the entry barriers for people who are not that close to using the conventional game controllers, but it still has a very tactile, immediate connection to the game. That's very important to both a core and casual audience. I believe that the immediate and strong tactile feedback with a game is very important for people to play games.

Regarding PS Vita, it's already shaping up to have one of the strongest launch lineups for a portable. Portable launch lineups have notoriously been weak. How important has it been to Sony to have such a strong launch lineup?
Thank you. It's been a pleasure to work on the platform. Our studios have not just been making games. We were involved from the very beginning of the hardware development itself. In 2008 some of the key studio members were convening in Japan to join some off-site meeting to discuss what it is that the next-generation portable console had to have. That was a time when even the core processors, like the CPU and GPU, had not been decided yet. That shows how early the group sought ideas and input from game developers, with a clear idea in mind that whatever hardware choices they make, they want to make those decision for *games*. Because of that process, we have worked with SCEI people for the last three years. So when the final features and specifications for Vita were decided, we already had a good idea why each component existed in Vita. And some of the experiments had already been done: For example, how the back touch panel might be used for games, because we had all seen and played an early prototype of *Little Deviants*. So that's a huge difference from in the past up to PS3: We would just get the final hardware and we were challenged by the hardware group to try anything new that we can come up with using these devices. This is very, very different.



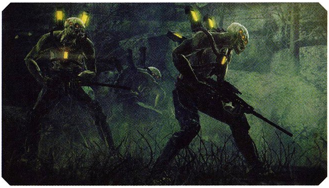
"I like many different aspects of Vita. But if I had to pick one, I want to point out the dual analog sticks. It was a challenge for the hardware guys to recreate the playability of the DualShock."

"We are so excited about some of the games we are launching this year: *Uncharted 3, Resistance 3, Twisted Metal.*"

Cross-platform play: How does it work in terms of the consumer? With *Ruin* as an example: Will I have to buy it twice? Or do I just buy it once?
That's something we're discussing now. Some consumers may only have PS3 and other people may only have PS Vita, and other people hopefully have both hardware. We'd like to give an option for the consumer to just purchase the PS3 version or the Vita version or both. We are looking at different options, and it's easier to do on the network side because everything is linked up. But other people may not have access to PSN or may not want to purchase games digitally. In that case we have to think about how we can cater to the different needs of our consumers.

Of all the different Vita inputs, what personally excites you most?
Because I was involved in every single decision that we have made, I like many different aspects of Vita. But if I had to pick one, I want to point out the dual analog sticks. It was a challenge for the hardware guys to recreate the playability of the DualShock. We were not too happy with what we had with PSP, the sliding mechanism. It felt a bit loose, it didn't have enough play, and the center was too large and had a dead zone. So we challenged them to recreate the great analog-stick

"PS3 is coming into the mature stage of the platform, and as you can tell by looking at games like *Uncharted 3*, developers are very, very comfortable working on games on PS3."



> “It would be nice if we could spend hundreds of millions of dollars marketing PS Move, but we are not just trying to sell plastic.”

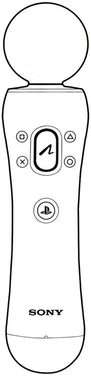
control. The answer was to create an analog stick that was small enough to put on the device, and it feels so good. That’s what I’m so excited about.

The user interface for Vita seems very friendly and inviting. It’s very different from the colder XMB interface. Is there any talk of bringing the Vita UI to PS3?
We are big fans XMB. It was introduced first on PSP and adapted to PS3, and is also on some of the Sony Electronics products like Bravia TVs and Blu-ray players. What it does well is to very quickly allow access to different media types and different files. It’s very obvious, even small children can understand it: go to Game to play a game, or go to Video to watch a video. With PS Vita we are hoping to merge the social connectivity with media consumption. The amount of data, or files, when it gets larger becomes more and more cumbersome and diminishes the control that XMB offers. So our design engineers and UI designers in Japan came up with a concept, and one of them really hit us hard—to give a whole Twitter page to an individual game title. We are so excited that even before you play the game, you can see all the relevant information about the game—what your friends are doing with the game, or what new content is available for the game. At this moment, it’s kind of a hassle to find the right content on PS3 XMB or PS Store. And people are busy, they may not have time to explore those options that are available on the store, so we wanted a very easy, quick, immediate way for people to find the right content, and a way to communicate with their friends. That functionality and our desire to incorporate it at the system level made us to believe that it’s time to move on from XMB. Your question about if we will adapt the same UI idea to other products, it’s TBD. We’d like to see future products have similar robust integrations of social connectivity; that’s what people expect now and that’s how people interact with each other. So as we see feedback, it’s possible the same idea might cross over to other products.

The PlayStation platforms also seem to have a much wider array of exclusive gaming content. Has that always been a goal: to have this bigger tent approach to the portfolio?
What I can say about the culture of PlayStation, from the very beginning in 1994, we really wanted to talk to a broad audience. We didn’t want to limit our efforts or reach just core gamers or just a general audience, so we didn’t have any special focus on one area. The other thing has been, we have very strong beliefs that it’s very talented people who create something exciting and new and amazing, so we stand behind those creative minds who have big ambitions or visions with strong, talented teams and try to support them to help them realize their goal in creating a unique experience. So depending on who and which team we work with, that creates some of the key products that we offer. Because we don’t limit ourselves in one area or the other, we can just look at what people and their teams come up with. As far as we can believe in their vision, we don’t limit ourselves to “we have to have core shooters” or “we need to do motion gaming” or that kind of approach. Of course at the very high level, we look at the total portfolio of products that we’ve been working on and try to adjust and seek some of the resource allocations. But we do that only after we have enough of these exciting propositions from the talented people we work with.

So the vision and creativity leads, and the marketing comes second?
In most cases, these are the people who lead us to the future. We do not invent everything that our hardware offers, we just talk to our creative game teams and try to help realize their goal from the hardware or system software.

Sony has consistently said that the PS3 will have a 10-year lifecycle. Is that still the case?
Absolutely. We have a feeling it will be longer than 10 years. PS2 has passed 10 years a couple years ago, and still consumers will choose a PS2. So PS3, we’ll see the same.



“PS Move is very, very important, and as I said, there are certain experiences that really make sense and cannot be replicated with conventional controllers like the DualShock.”

Do you think Vita plays a role in helping extend the PS3 lifecycle?
We’ve shown different ways to use the PS Vita with PS3, like *Wipeout* you can play head-to-head or *Ruin* you can continue your gameplay using PS3 and PS Vita. That was all proposed by developers. We didn’t impose or suggest something like that—they just came up with the idea and did it. And in a similar way, Mr. Kojima from Konami just announced the concept of transfarring a game between a PSP and PS3 or PS Vita and PS3. So what I consistently hear from our developers, it’s way easier to use PS Vita and PS3 in a connected way because the core performance is much more similar between these two platforms compared to between PSP and PS3. And we are offering more ways to connect these two devices: The PSN features will be a full feature set for Vita when it launches, and we are adding more PSN back-end services, like location-based services or video services. And with cloud storage, it doesn’t limit access from PS Vita or PS3. So it will become easier and easier for developers to make use of these two devices.

Any final words for our readers?
Some people ask if we are slowing down at all on the PS3; that’s totally not the case. PS3 is coming into the mature stage of the platform, and as you can tell by looking at games like *Uncharted 3*, developers are feeling very, very comfortable working on games on PS3. So you’ll see more and more great content on PS3. At the same time, we aren’t forgetting our mistake when we supported PSP and then a couple of years after launch, we shifted too many resources to PS3. So we are trying to maintain a good balance between PS Vita and PS3.

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Reviews

Your essential guide to new releases

If there's one thing we can say about *Duke Nukem Forever* it's that it definitively disproved the maxim, "Better late than never." After more than a decade of anticipation, the finished product finally limped its way onto store shelves and was met almost immediately by a collective groan from the greater gaming populace.

In a way, it makes perfect sense: the project bounced from developer to developer and endured several full reboots all while trying to keep pace with 15 years worth of gaming innovation. How could it *not* feel thrown together and woefully dated? Still, rationalizations aside, watching a gaming icon like Duke implode so completely left us with heavy hearts.

Fortunately, a handful of fresh, original games helped salvage our bummer summer. Games like the awe-inspiring *El Shaddai*—which uses biblical lore as a jumping off point for a surreal and engrossing adventure—and *Catherine*, a distinctly Japanese puzzle game that's as much about adult dating drama as it is about, uh, blocks.

With football, superheroes, and a new kind of *F.E.A.R.* rounding out the season, our summer's ending on a high note after all.

F.E.A.R. 3

A survival-horror game that features co-op with two completely different character options and in which players can grief each other...what?

CAPTAIN AMERICA: SUPER SOLDIER

While most licensed games never bother with ambition, this blockbuster tie-in takes a real stab at being fun.

EARTH DEFENSE FORCE: INSECT ARMAGEDDON

Funny thing about this game: its title is really long. So long, in fact, that we couldn't fit all of it above the review. At least now you know what *EDF* stands for.

How we score our reviews...

10 Awesome Instant classic that's nearly PlayStation perfection.

9 Excellent Highly recommended and a great investment.

8 Great Wonderful yet still possesses minor flaws.

7 Good Enjoyable but with definite room for improvement.

6 Acceptable A decent offering, but one that only satisfies in places.

5 Mediocre A game that's both fun and frustrating in equal measure.

4 Flawed Too flawed to be anything more than a curiosity.

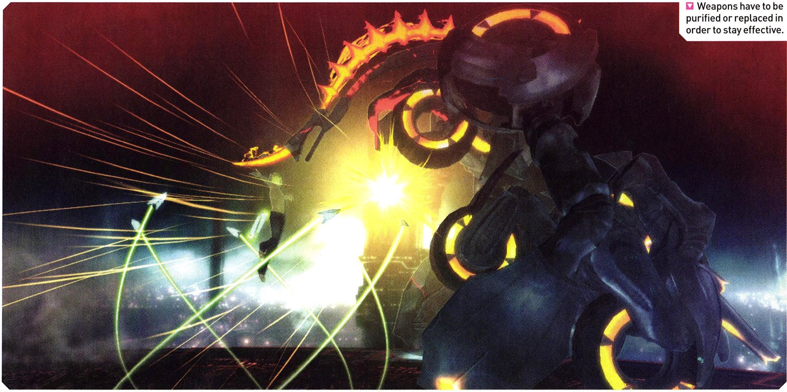
3 Poor A seriously defective game with no long-term appeal.

2 Awful A disgrace to the bargain bin. Avoid it like the plague.

1 Raw Sewage Apparently, feces *can* be pressed on a disc.

GOLD AWARD
PlayStation
The Official Magazine

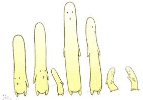
Our Highest Accolade
The gold award is presented to any game that we feel demonstrates significant innovation, near flawless gameplay, great graphics, and profound appeal.



Weapons have to be purified or replaced in order to stay effective.

El Shaddai Ascension of the Metatron

A worthy leap of faith



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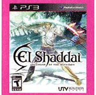


Format PS3
Pub Ignition Ent.
Dev Ignition Tokyo
Price $59.99
ESRB Teen
It's like the gods have gone artsy.

As children, our parents warned us to avoid broaching the topic of religion. *El Shaddai: Ascension of the Metatron* has taken this advice under consideration and politely declined to pay heed.

Based on the Dead Sea Scrolls, *El Shaddai* mixes third-person action and platforming with the story of Enoch, a heavenly scribe tasked with sealing away the souls of seven Fallen Angels whose unholy union with humans has given birth to the adorable Nephilim. Left to their hunger, the Nephilim will consume each other and engulf the world in destruction, leaving God no choice but to unleash a great flood to cleanse the planet should Enoch fail in his mission.

The game spans hundreds of years as Enoch searches for the hidden Tower of Babel built by the Fallen. He eventually discovers and scales the tower with the aid of the angel Lucifel and the four Archangels. It would make sense for each of the seven Fallen Angels to occupy one of the Tower's seven levels, but *El Shaddai* loves to defy our expectations. The Fallen prefer striking at random to test Enoch's strength, so it wasn't until roughly three hours into the game that we actually faced one of them.

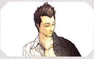
Though not every floor leaves players with an epic fight against the Fallen, each one provides numerous obstacles, including giant armored pigs and at least one particularly angry Nephilim.

Sweet Simplicity

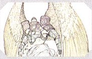
The combat itself is ingenious in its minimalism: Using two attack buttons along with the jump or guard buttons, we were able to create numerous fluid attacks. Timing is everything in *El Shaddai*, both in the platforming and the combat. A pause mixed in with rapid button presses can mean the difference between a heavy combo finisher and a punishing guard break.

Though the combat is highly dynamic, it was easy for us to fall into a routine of using only specific moves for specific weapons, which is why *El Shaddai* employs a Triad of Balance (read: rock-paper-scissors-style balancing system) to ensure no single weapon is all-powerful. For example, while the shield-like Veil is ideal for defending against the Gale's projectile attacks, it doesn't fare as well against the bladed Arch's guard breaks. This forced us to steal weapons from enemies mid-fight (the only way to acquire weapons), which created challenge, strategy, and a genuine

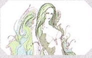
Heaven's Helpers Enoch isn't alone on his journey



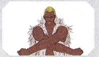
Lucifel acts as Enoch's sartorial guide as well as his save point.



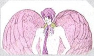
Michael, leader of the Archangels, is one of the voices we hear.



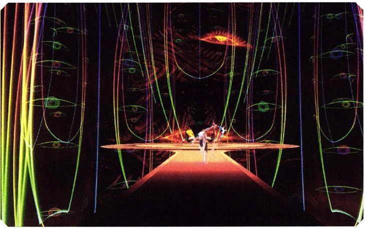
Archangel Gabriel's voice warns us of impending doom.



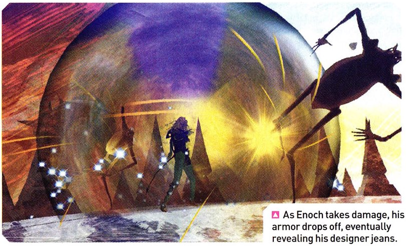
The strongest of the Archangels, Uriel aids Enoch in combat.



Raphael is the fourth and final Archangel advising Enoch.



Those who want to simply experience *El Shaddai's* lavish world can lower the difficulty so the game is a cakewalk. On tougher levels, though, it's punishing!

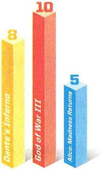


As Enoch takes damage, his armor drops off, eventually revealing his designer jeans.

sense of accomplishment when we eventually emerged victorious.

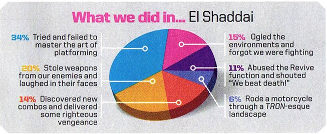
Even death is made easy with the Revive system. The game eschews any kind of heads-up display, opting instead to chip away at Enoch's armor to indicate deteriorating health. When all of Enoch's armor has broken off, we have a brief window to mash the four action buttons and bring him back to life. The window gets progressively smaller until we can't revive in time and are sent back to the most recent checkpoint.

Unfortunately, *El Shaddai* is so focused on uncomplicated controls that we can't even move the camera outside of battle. We found ourselves getting frustrated when a poorly placed camera left us unable to discern the distance of a jump we needed to make.



ScorePole

El Shaddai shines brightly in the realm of allegorical action platformers.



Isn't She Lovely?

If ever there were a game that embodied "visually stunning," *El Shaddai* is it. Traveling through each level is akin to jumping from one psychedelic dream to another, mainly because each floor of the tower in some manner represents the Fallen who rules it. A fight on the back of a motorcycle should seem out of place in a game set centuries ago, but in this case it embodies the utopia of a fallen angel obsessed with human evolution, so speeding through a futuristic metropolis is oddly fitting. We jumped from 3D environments to 2D platforming and back again, and it always felt natural. The shifts in gameplay styles—along with the escalating level of difficulty—kept the game from ever feeling stagnant.

Because the environments are constantly moving, however, there are points where levels feel overcrowded. Attempting to make a timed leap onto a moving platform while a giant Nephilim is jumping in the foreground can be nigh impossible due to the vexing visual clutter. Thankfully, missing a jump did little more than send us back to the last stable platform.

Much like the fallen angels who we must defeat, *El Shaddai* is not without flaws. But its consistently fascinating story and ever-evolving world—along with its minimalist and elegant gameplay—make saving the world a magnificent endeavor. **ANNE LEWIS**

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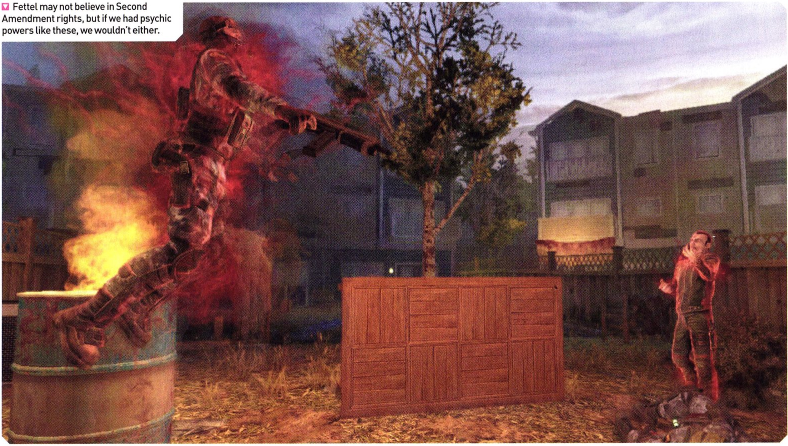
Fettel may not believe in Second Amendment rights, but if we had psychic powers like these, we wouldn't either.



F.E.A.R. 3

Nothing to fear but F.E.A.R. itself

If we've learned anything from Japanese horror films like *The Grudge* and *The Ring* it's that creepy children with a penchant for violence are downright terrifying. Naturally this also holds true for *F.E.A.R.'s* hair-raising starlet Alma, whose presence has remained an essential element in the franchise's pulse-pounding immersion. Yet developer Day 1 Studios has now put a decidedly new spin on the series by sacrificing atmospheric intensity for cooperative gameplay, making *F.E.A.R. 3* a confused effort that lacks a solid identity.

Brotherly Love

During the main campaign, we control one of *F.E.A.R.'s* psychic brothers—military-trained soldier Point Man or back-from-the-dead psychic Paxton Fettel—while a partner controls the other, should we opt for co-op play. Set nine months after the events of the first game, we return to the city of Fairport where we must locate our deranged, psychic, and very pregnant mother while battling hordes of Armacham troops and hellish fiends.

Gunplay is smooth and frantic, and a well-implemented cover system allows us to naturally hug barricades and walls when taking heavy fire. The brothers' distinct playstyles complement each other well: Point Man uses bullet-time slow-mo techniques to gain an advantage on the battlefield while Fettel incapacitates enemies (and even possesses their bodies) with his psychic abilities.

The co-op dynamic allows for some unique strategizing—such as utilizing cover as Point Man while Fettel possesses an enemy and charges the front lines, leaving our distracted foes open to attack from a distance—but playing with a teammate quickly dismantles the game's already anemic scare factor.

Taking Point

In addition to the new co-op gameplay, a point-based challenge system has been introduced. Players earn points by completing challenges (kill X

Info

Format PS3
Pub Warner Bros. Interactive Ent.
Dev Day 1 Studios
Price $59.99
ESRB Mature
It's like a family reunion gone wrong.

United By F.E.A.R. Multiplayer modes to die for

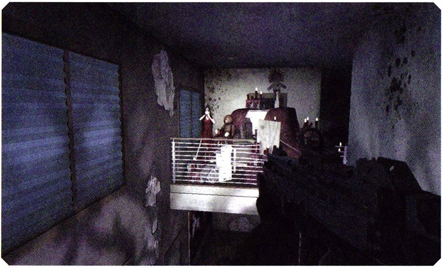
Co-op Campaign An asymetrical two-player story campaign

Fking Run** Run, gun, and escape Alma's persistent wall of death

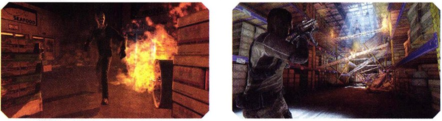
Contractions A horde mode featuring endless waves of newborns

Soul Survivor Corrupted players must infect their opponents

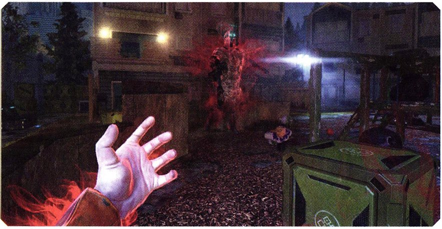
Soul King Possess human enemies to participate in combat



Aww, how cute—the murderous Alma is blowing us kisses! This is about as scary as *F.E.A.R. 3* gets.



From Armacham armies to hordes of suicide bomber cultists, there's plenty of blood to be shed.



enemies without dying, score X number of headshots), which in turn unlock new abilities like faster health regeneration or increased resilience. While this system feels out of place during solo play, it promotes a constant tug-of-war relationship between Point Man and Fettel in co-op.

We worked with our partner to finish levels before their target completion times (netting us bonus points) while simultaneously trying to outscore him by racking up kills and fulfilling character-specific challenges. Our reward? We both watched the same unique ending associated with the brother who accumulated the most points in the campaign. There are drawbacks, however: challenges glaringly invade the screen upon completion, breaking what little immersion we had.

F.E.A.R. 3 also comes with a suite of mostly creative multiplayer modes (particularly F**king Run, in which we have to escape a wall of death while running and gunning our way to safety), but there's little to keep us coming back once the novelty wears off.

While *F.E.A.R. 3* is at its best as a solid (and fun) co-op shooter, it stumbles as an addition to the series. We couldn't help but feel disappointed by the lack of atmosphere that had kept us on the edge of our seats in the past.

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RYAN TALJONICK

DLC Roundup

Castlevania: Lords of Shadow
Resurrection
Price **$9.99** ESRB **Mature**

The grand finale to the *Lords of Shadow* saga is finally here, as Gabriel Belmont embarks on the last leg of his dark journey, culminateing in an epic showdown with The Forgotten One. More action focused and platforming heavy than the last installment, *Resurrection* kicks up the intensity.

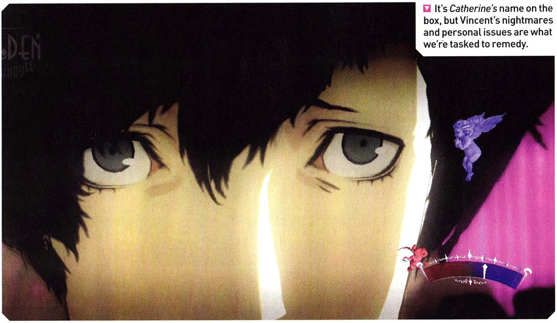
ModNation Racers
Big City Theme and Career Extension
Price **$9.99** ESRB **Everyone**

This beefy expansion to the ever-growing *ModNation* toolbox is brimming with new Trophies, tokens, and unlockable items. Burn some rubber across five new tracks or make one from scratch using the generous glut of new parts.

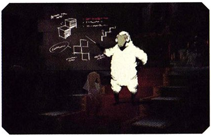
Download of the Month

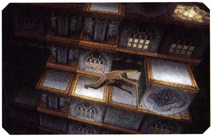
Call of Duty: Black Ops
Escalation
Price $14.99 **ESRB** Mature

Spilling hot lead across four awesome new multiplayer maps that include a zoo and a swanky hotel gives this DLC some oomph, but it's the new zombie map that really blows our minds. A zombified George Romero makes a guest appearance in this undead bloodbath that stars Danny Trejo, Sarah Michelle Gellar, and other notable stars.



It's *Catherine's* name on the box, but Vincent's nightmares and personal issues are what we're tasked to remedy.





Catherine boasts strong story and characters, but its gameplay is comprised almost entirely of block-sliding puzzles.

Catherine

Can't live with 'em, can't live without...sliding blocks?!

Info

Format PS3 **Pub** Atlus
Dev Atlus Persona Team
Price $59.99 **ESRB** Mature
It's like playing a 3D slide puzzle to spend more time with a hottie.

The effect beautiful women have on men is amazing...and predictable. One moment we're directionless, struggling losers trying to fill our vapid lives by commiserating with friends, consuming mass quantities of alcohol, and desperately seeking sex. The next moment, post-dream girl encounter, we're still losers—but losers willing to make complete fools of ourselves.

That, in a nutshell, is the story of Vincent, a 32-year-old techie who spends more time hangin' with friends than focusing on his personal and professional development. His longtime girlfriend Katherine is antsy about the status quo of their relationship, but it's not until the young, flirty, and vivacious Catherine enters his life that complications arise and the nightmares begin.

These nightmares are the crux of *Catherine's* gameplay. Every night, Vincent is confronted by towering stacks of blocks that he must climb while being taunted by a faceless tormenter and chased by demonic apparitions based on his real-life concerns and stresses. The suitably disturbing Bible- and sheep-themed imagery helped create palpable tension as we urgently sought to construct an ascending escape passage from the mountain of blocks and avoid our bloody demise. Specialized blocks and powerups that create, blow up, or allow super-leaps over other cubes lurk in the rubble, along with merciless rival sheep and pursuing boss demons. This is a puzzle game from hell: Insidiously challenging on Easy and punishingly cruel on harder settings, it torments with a grinding series of similar puzzles, but rewards with a mastery acquired through repeated trial and error.

Catherine's non-nightmare portions serve as the enticement to persevere through its puzzle segments. Through a series of anime-movie–style cutscenes and semi-interactive interludes in the Stray Sheep pizza bar, the story of Vincent's predicament, a series of mysterious deaths, and the multifaceted cast of support characters kept us on the hook. Details and information we uncovered shaped our progression through the game, and an unlabeled meter tracked our actions and decisions to determine which of the multiple endings we'd see. The meter isn't a straightforward good/evil gauge so it wasn't always easy to discern how our choices would affect the outcome. The ending we experienced was a "happy" safe one, but some of the other endings are more surprising and provocative.

The question is whether we'd revisit *Catherine* to see these alternate endings. Its story-fueled, cinematic carrot-on-stick approach is an effective mechanic, but it falls short of being an innovative fusion of the puzzle and adventure genres. This is still a puzzle game at heart, and as much as we appreciate its layers and wrinkles, we're as relieved as Vincent to escape the push-pull-climb gauntlet.

Yet, we can see *Catherine* having a polarizing effect: Some gamers will find little appeal in its often frustrating block-sliding, while others will revel in an unusual experience that stands apart from shooters and action games. While we're not ready for a long-term relationship, we're infatuated with *Catherine*—she's certainly worthy of a fling. **ROGER BURCHILL**

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Cast List

THE TYPICAL MALE

Vincent
The word commitment isn't in his vocabulary

THE FREE SPIRIT

Catherine
Young, beautiful, and definitely trouble

THE BALL 'N' CHAIN

Katherine
Looking for a ring in all the wrong places

Captain America
Super Soldier

Stealing from the best

Info
Format PS3 **Pub** Sega
Dev Next Level
Price $49.99 **ESRB** Teen
It's like *Arkham Asylum* crossed with *Wolfenstein.*

Sega's movie-licensed Marvel games have had one thing in common: They're uniformly terrible. Imagine our surprise, then, when *Captain America* turned out to actually be interesting. Ditching the by-the-numbers action approach, it tries hard to be something better...specifically, *Batman: Arkham Asylum*.

The combat's similar, although it lacks the same flow and tight controls: Enemies stream out by the dozen to surround Cap, their attacks telegraphed by flashes that enable Cap to counter. The semi-open-world approach allows Cap to explore the enormous Castle Zemo, a sprawling, HYDRA-controlled complex replete with diverse areas, interesting plot twists, and lots of stuff to collect or smash.

Unfortunately, there aren't any interesting gadgets or detective aspects to offset the lame *Prince of Persia*-style acrobatics that boil down to mashing X repeatedly. But bouncing Cap's thrown shield between multiple enemies is almost entertaining enough to make up for it.

The game doesn't always succeed, but the fact that it tries—and is largely a fun, engaging adventure—makes it worth a look. MIKEL REPARAZ

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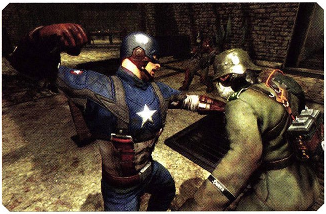
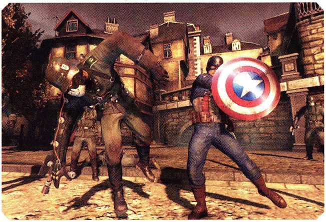
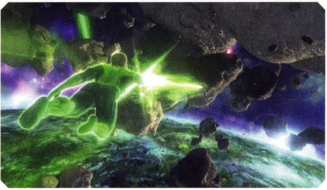
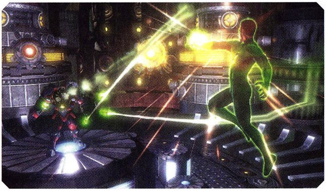


Real wars are won not with guns or ammunition, but with lots of punching in the ugly faces of stupid enemies.







Green Lantern can create *anything* that he can imagine. Including these, uh, glowy green orbs.

Info

Format PS3
Pub Warner Bros. Interactive Ent.
Dev Double Helix
Price $49.99
ESRB Teen
It's like 95 percent *God of War* and 5 percent green.

Green Lantern
Rise of the Manhunters

It's not easy being green

While movie tie-in games aren't expected to be original, it's appreciated when they're at least playable. Sure, comic fans might have hoped for more from Green Lantern's first solo outing, but sometimes it's enough just to be a satisfying, competent action game. *Manhunters* is strongly influenced by the *God of War* series, but so were many other fine games. This one joins the ranks of the above-average imitators.

Taking place after the film, players control Ryan Reynolds' version of Hal Jordan and combat the invading Manhunters, which work as standard videogame killer robots. It's disappointing that a ring that can make *anything* rarely creates little more than a dozen different energy constructs, but the combo-heavy combat and attractive visuals eventually warmed us up to the game.

It may not be a truly heroic experience, but *Manhunters* and the Green Lantern movie would make for a fine weekend double feature. HENRY GILBERT

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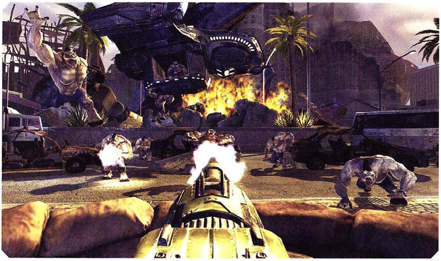

Duke Nukem Forever

We still have some bubblegum left

We feel like we should make a joke about ugly enemies, but Duke took all our material.

Info

Format PS3 **Pub** 2K Games
Dev Gearbox Software
Price $59.99 **ESRB** Mature
It's like a woeful waste of 15 years.

Remember the kid on the playground who used to show off his father's dirty magazines and thought poop jokes were the coolest thing ever? That's *Duke Nukem Forever*. The game opens by asking players to piss—an important method of gaining Ego, Duke's equivalent to a health bar—and then immediately rehashes the final fight from *Duke Nukem 3D* in which Duke uses the giant alien Cycloid emperor's eyeball to kick a field goal.

It only goes downhill from there.

Duke must stop aliens from taking Earth's women, and while we worried about the potential for sexist humor, the jokes were so juvenile and overblown we couldn't actually be offended. Compared to Duke, every character in the game is a useless damsel in distress, including the military men.

Sadly, there's absolutely nothing compelling about the story at all. We never felt we had a reason to keep playing, especially after a ridiculous mission involving a stripper and some rather unsavory items we were forced to collect in order to procure her services.

Forever mixes rudimentary FPS gameplay with awkward platforming and ridiculous minigames, which served only to draw us away from the actual game. Playing pinball and trying our luck at the slots gain us Ego, but when they're placed in the middle of an invasion, they break any tension we should be feeling while aliens are trying to rip out our spleens.

Along with a myriad of weapons like the Shrink Gun from *Duke Nukem 3D*, Duke has certain special items and skills like the Holoduke (which distracts enemies) and Dukevision (which allows Duke to see in the dark). Though they were occasionally helpful, we could carry only one of each item type at a time, which arbitrarily crippled their usefulness.

Forever attempts to push boundaries in a way that never actually pushes any boundaries. The crude humor and jabs at pop culture are exactly what we expect, and even the statements designed to be particularly shocking do little more than make us shrug with apathy. *Forever* eschews any hope for a decent story or interesting gameplay in favor of shoving as many boobs in our face as possible. As a result, the game comes up short in every way possible.

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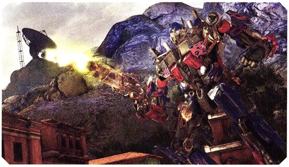
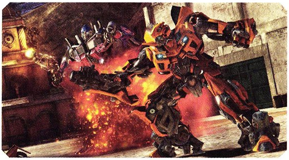
ANNE LEWIS





Transformers

Dark of the Moon

Boredom in disguise

Info

Format PS3
Pub Activision
Dev High Moon Studios
Price $59.99
ESRB Teen
It's like last year's *Transformers* game, only less exciting.

For a game with such an unmistakable subtitle, *Transformers: Dark of the Moon* sure looks a whole lot like last year's *War for Cybertron*, except this bucket of bolts pales in comparison to that winning reboot.

A film tie-in that serves as a prequel to the summer blockbuster, *Moon* once again puts players in control of both Autobots and Decepticons in distinct missions. Unfortunately, repetitive combat makes the short campaign seem to drag on, with laborious boss fights and clunky vehicle segments further weighing down the experience. The single-player quest is brief, loud, and largely unattractive, plus the mid-mission story cinematics do little to explain exactly what's going on.

Online multiplayer is the lone bright spot here. The frantic 10-player battles are worth a quick look for die-hard series aficionados, but with just three play modes, the trimmed offering again proves slim compared to the much heftier *Cybertron*. This quick-and-dirty movie game lures fans in with the promise of another quality *Transformers* adventure; sadly, *Moon* offers much less than meets the eye. **ANDREW HAYWARD**

PlayStation The Official Magazine **4**

NCAA Football 12

Necessary roughness

Among this season's new features are custom conferences and 3D turf.

Info

Format PS3
Pub EA Sports
Dev EA Tiburon
Price $59.99
ESRB Everyone
It's like learning to inflict pain while earning a degree (maybe).

After playing *NCAA Football 12*, we're thinking a season of Saturday-only football wouldn't be so bad.

The most noticeable improvement this year is the brand-new tackling system, which allows for simultaneous hits and more realistic contact. EA's *NCAA* game has always felt a little flat in comparison to *Madden*, so this is a critical step forward. Watching our running backs ping-pong off multiple hits and run through contact while hitting the gap is supremely satisfying.

Increased intensity and realism appear to be key themes in general. Smarter crowd reactions mean the stadium cheers at the right moments, and Dynasty mode—which allows players to work their way up to Head Coach (and even get fired)—maintains a constant pressure to perform.

NCAA 12's Road to Glory mode warrants special attention. This year, we play our entire senior high school season before starting college, with the option to play both offense and defense. Nothing epitomizes the college game more than a gutsy 19-year-old winning the Heisman while playing both ways.

Our only real complaint? Just like in real life, there's no post-season playoff, only bowl games: a travesty, but a realistic one. **GEORGE JONES**

PlayStation The Official Magazine 9

Sniper Ghost Warrior

Format **PSN** Pub **City Interactive**
Dev **City Interactive** Price **$39.99** ESRB **Mature**

In *Sniper: Ghost Warrior*, we control an elite sharpshooter and, as such, spend time stealthily hunting our targets. Before taking a shot, we must account for bullet drop by factoring in target distance, wind condition, and heart rate. Though a neat idea in theory, the experience is marred by muddy visuals, wonky A.I., and a checkpoint system that literally freezes gameplay for seconds at a time. The core gameplay simply isn't strong enough to overcome the technical shortcomings. **RYAN TALJONICK**

PlayStation The Official Magazine 4

Akimi Village

Format **PSN** Pub **Sony Online Entertainment**
Dev **NinjaBee** Price **$9.99** ESRB **Everyone**

Helping a settlement of diminutive critters construct a town and rid their floating island of bothersome gloom is a lot of work, but *Akimi Village's* enticing blend of casual strategizing and civilization building makes laboring away under the hot virtual sun an unexpected treat. With no monsters to fight, the focus rests on expanding town infrastructure and chipping away at debris to reclaim pockets of land consumed by the gloom. Looking beyond the kid-friendly presentation, we found a goldmine of fun in this staggeringly deep yet lighthearted civ-management adventure. **NATHAN MEUNIER**

PlayStation The Official Magazine 8

EDF Insect Armageddon

Format **PS3** Pub **D3Publisher** Dev **Vicious Cycle**
Price **$39.99** ESRB **Teen**

Instead of trying to reinvent the action genre, Vicious Cycle hopes we're fine being thrown into a destructible city to fight off thousands of gargantuan insect robots. Lucky for them, we are. Selecting a unique character class and blowing apart baddies with hundreds of lootable weapons is as fun as it sounds, despite occasional graphical and audio bugs. Thanks to the ability to play both offline with splitscreen and online with up to four people, it's easy to recommend this budget-priced title that aims low but hits hard. **HOLLANDER COOPER**

PlayStation The Official Magazine 7

HAPPY NEW YEAR

The Big Bang Theory

The fourth season of TV's most nerd-tastic show

There's a good reason CBS picked up *The Big Bang Theory* for another three seasons. It's hard to believe that a sitcom from Chuck Lorre—generally not regarded for high-brow humor—would be the most hilarious and intellectually engaging half-hour on primetime. Yet, this insanely entertaining show manages to be consistently great every episode.

Thoroughly steeped in all the good things in life—videogames, comics, science, girls, and obsessive-compulsive nerd talk and behavior—*The Big Bang Theory's* chronicles of four of the most likeable nerds around has somehow turned socially awkward isolationist behavior into entertainment for the masses without dumbing it down.

Season four manages to pull off some impressive amounts of character development without losing any steam. Although some fans instantly took a disliking to Leonard moving on from his relationship with the hottie next-door neighbor Penny, it's hard to feel too bad when the next girl in line is an insanely hot Indian. Howard proposes and Raj...almost talks to a woman sober and gets the best scene of the season in the finale.

The center of the show is the brilliant and likely high-functioning autistic Sheldon Cooper, who rightfully remains the butt of some brilliantly cruel jokes. It's to the show's credit that, despite constantly being thrown into a variety of sitcom plot threads, he never wavers from his core personality. The character's egotistical mania combined with an amazing lack of (and desire for) social skills has made Cooper one of TV's most fascinatingly alien characters.

The show looks great on Blu-ray, but more importantly, the humor works on repeated viewings. There's not a ton of extras unfortunately. The cast interviewing each other is amusing and the short on the Barenaked Ladies' theme song is nice, but commentary for episodes would have been especially appealing.

We wouldn't venture to say the show has gotten better each season, but every season is at least as good as the last and thoroughly laugh-out-loud funny. If the show's writers can keep this up, we'll be more than happy to stick with this motley crew for years to come.

JASON D'APRILE

PlayStation The Official Magazine
9

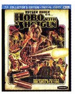
Info

THE COMPLETE FOURTH SEASON
the BIG BANG THEORY

Price $54.97
Creators Chuck Lorre, Bill Prady
Starring Johnny Galecki, Jim Parsons, Kaley Cuoco, Simon Helberg
Rated Not Rated
Extras Cast featurette, Barenaked Ladies on *The Big Bang Theory*, gag reel, music video.

Hobo with a Shotgun

Great actors can triumph over anything... Almost.



Info

Price $29.98 **Creators** Jason Eisener, John Davies **Starring** Rutger Hauer, Molly Bunsworth, Brian Downey **Rated** R **Extras** Commentary, making-of shorts, deleted and alternate scenes.

On the first commentary track for *Hobo with a Shotgun*, Rutger Hauer is very open about the fact that he likes to be as accessible an actor as possible. After watching this movie, we believe him. *Shotgun* is almost two entirely different movies—one is an appallingly bad, cheesy, gore-filled waste that seems to have been made by a couple of film-school kids desperate to pay homage to all the terrible, B-movies from Troma Entertainment and other similar '70s and '80s-era blood pushers.

The other film is Rutger Hauer brilliantly portraying a homeless man with a meager dream who's thrust into a violent and oppressive situation for which a loaded shotgun is the only answer. Hauer is so far above anyone or anything else in this movie that he manages to elevate it whenever he's on screen. Despite the senseless and mostly idiotic script, his performance is honest, rugged, and somehow, utterly believable.

Given that nearly every other actor in the movie is attempting to act like a drug-addled extra auditioning for the '60s *Batman* show, this makes watching *Shotgun* somewhat discombobulating. Ignore Hauer and you have a movie that starts off with a film-grained, '70s-style opening and immediately launches into hideously fake-looking, over-the-top violence that gushes impossible amounts of off-color movie blood—while terrible actors spew even worse dialogue.

But for gore hounds and horror fiends, all this is perfectly acceptable. The problem for more discerning lovers of violence and exploitation is that there's absolutely nothing else to recommend beyond Hauer's performance. While *Drive Angry* and *Machete* prove that directors can pay homage to exploitation films without producing crap, *Shotgun* reminds us that anyone can, for better or worse, make a movie. And apparently, get Rutger Hauer to star in it.

A minor saving grace: those who savor classically bad movies will appreciate the ton of extras, including the entertaining commentary. JD

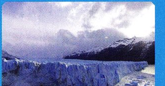
PlayStation The Official Magazine 4

Blu-ray Roundup

Rubber

Price $29.98 **Rated** R

The strangest thing about *Rubber* isn't that the movie's killer is a sentient telekinetic tire. Part slasher-movie satire, part bizarre experimental art film, *Rubber* is so schizophrenic that it's hard to define. Still, for viewers who enjoy bizarre, French, and definitely creative filmmaking, this oddity is worth checking out. ⑥



Wonders of the Universe

Price $24.99 **Rated** Not Rated

This latest BBC documentary is possibly the most insightful, engaging, and strangely depressing look at astrophysics we've ever seen. But with gorgeous visuals and a relating-the-universe's-mysteries focus, this is fascinating stuff for the non-scientists among us. ⑧

Fringe The Complete Third Season

Price $69.97 **Rated** Not Rated

Sci-fi lovers cheered when *Fringe* was miraculously picked up for a fourth season. Season three's two-universes-colliding plot is kept in check by the show's smart scripts and terrific characters as J.J. Abrams' creation just keeps getting better. ⑧

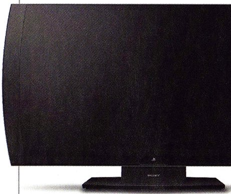
Hall Pass

Price $35.99 **Rated** R

Hall Pass is arguably the best Farrelly Brothers film in years. It's an occasionally raunchy, but frequently hilarious sex comedy that offers a (painfully) accurate look at older married guys trying to reclaim their youthful glory. ⑦

Want that

Lust-have stuff for PlayStation people



PlayStation 3D Display

3D gaming just became more accessible with this 24-inch LCD 1080p HDTV. Its two-player mode offers individualized fullscreen images through the 3D glasses during co-op play.

$500

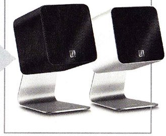
playstation.com

Midi Fighter Pro

Digital DJ meets arcade gamer. This controller, built to work with DJ software like Serato and Traktor, embraces gaming combos as a metaphor for music control. The arcade buttons are official Sanwa.

$350

djtechtools.com



UCube

These small speakers require only two cables and no external power supply; a "smart" power supply stores energy during quieter song passages, so as to deliver 15 watts per speaker when needed.

$150

ufiproducts.com

Unit Portables

These stylish, Swedish-designed bags can be customized according to the user's needs, with attachable straps, pockets, and sleeves to protect and carry laptops or use as a shoulder bag.

$110

en.unitportables.com

Sony DSC-HX9V

This pocketable 16.2 megapixel shooter sports a 16x wide-angle zoom lens and a brilliantly sharp 3-inch LCD. It also offers 10 fps full-res burst mode, full manual control, and 1080p video capture.

$350

sonystyle.com

SONY
Sony Lens G
Cyber
G

12:00
Messaging
Available
MESSENGER
Scott Higuchi
TODAY
Elizabeth Costa
Ryan Lowe
LAST WEEK
Tori Thatcher
Steve Klein
Mark Nicholls
Block Sender
Delete conversation
New conversation
Enter message here..

Let's say Chez Nous at 6:00. I'm...

Great seeing you too!

Can you do lunch this week?

Haha. You're too funny!

That was a great idea. Thanks...

Awesome. I'll get tickets.

How's your day going? Meet up after work?

Got a ton done this morning. You?

Yep. Client loved the presentation.

Congrats! This calls for a celebration.

Let's say Chez Nous at 6:00. I'm buying.

HP TouchPad

Running on the eagerly awaited webOS, the TouchPad does a fine job with multitasking, web surfing, and other tablet-based media gorging. Apple officially has another competitor in the tablet market.

$500/$600 (16/32GB)

hp.com

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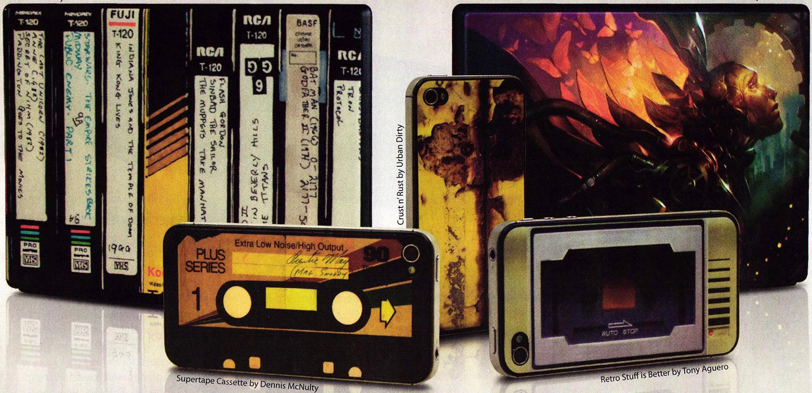

VHS Heroes by Hollis Brown Thornton

Artificial Dreams by Julie Dillon

Crust n' Rust by Urban Dirty

Supertape Cassette by Dennis McNulty

Retro Stuff is Better by Tony Aguero

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ENTER contests
WIN cash!

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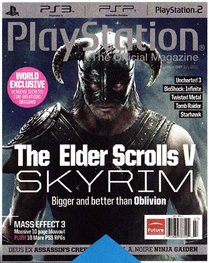
mail@ptom

PlayStation Vita couldn't be sweetah, off the laugh track, Scott's doppelganger, and Flavio!

Email us at PTOM_letters@futureus.com or write to PTOM, c/o Future US, 4000 Shoreline Ct. Suite 400, South San Francisco, CA 94080. Letters may be edited for length and clarity.



The future of RPGs is so bright, we have to wear stylish horned helms.

SONY
PS VITA
SELECT
START

Essential Vita-mins

I've been researching the PlayStation Vita and I am very impressed. The games look great and so does the system overall. This is a great step for Sony and I commend them for it. But I'm writing to ask you a question about the Vita's Wi-Fi capabilities. How exactly will it work? Which carriers can I use? How much will it cost? Will there still be Internet access even if I don't buy the $300 3G version?

JOHN WALDROP PARTS UNKNOWN

The PlayStation Vita excites us as well, but Sony hasn't revealed all the details surrounding its connectivity yet. We do know that the $249 Wi-Fi only model will be able to access the Internet via Wi-Fi hotspots and home networks. The $299 Wi-Fi + 3G version will require an AT&T contract for 3G service, but there's still no word on what the actual monthly subscription cost will be. Check out this issue's PSV A to Z feature starting on page 64 to learn more, and keep reading PTOM for the latest Vita news leading up to its holiday release.

Splitting Hairs

I was just curious how many times Scott Butterworth has been sued by "Jim" (John Krasinski) from *The Office* for stealing his hairdo. Does Scott have to pay royalties to NBC? **BILL ROGAN** PARTS UNKNOWN

Now that you mention it, Bill, there is definitely an unnerving resemblance. We suspect cloning, or the even more insidious hair cloning. But then, it is rather curious that Scott's never available to work late on Thursdays...

Me Love You Short Time

This message is in regards to the June issue's article about games being too short. The history of games has proven very strongly that videogames can be long as well as groundbreaking and intriguing. *Final Fantasy VII* was my first RPG and I played that game for more than 80 hours—I paid $50 for it in '97. Some might say that RPGs are story-based games and have nothing to offer but a long life. True, but why can't great games like *Uncharted* and *Killzone* offer a lasting storyline? There is no reason for it, other than laziness on the part of the game companies. Look at *L.A. Noire*, Rockstar put heart and soul into this game, it has a storyline that keeps your attention, graphics to rival it peers, great cinematography, good gameplay, voice acting, and motion capture that left the player yearning for more. Its playtime is 30 hours for the average gamer, easy. To sum up my argument, flashy graphics and good engines are wonderful and I am thankful for them, but when I get to enjoy them for less than a standard workday, I feel cheated.

MICHAEL LONGWILL PARTS UNKNOWN

We welcome reader photos, letters, and stories ("Submissions"), however, we cannot promise to publish any Submission and none will be returned. Neither PlayStation: The Official Magazine ("PTOM") nor Future US, Inc. shall be liable for loss or damage to any Submission. By sending in your Submissions to PTOM you represent and warrant that you own or otherwise have all necessary rights to the Submissions to allow us to publish them in PTOM and as follows. You grant PTOM a worldwide, royalty-free, perpetual, irrevocable, non-exclusive right and fully sub-licensable license to use, copy, distribute, publish, modify, adapt, translate, and store, your Submissions, in any form, format, or medium, of any kind now known or later developed and to use your name, likeness, and any other information in connection with the use of the Submission you provide.

Suck It Up, Man!

It seems the games I am dying to play all release around the same time. October and November are stacked with releases (*Dark Souls*, *Batman: Arkham City*, *Battlefield 3*, *Uncharted 3*, *Modern Warfare 3*, *Elder Scrolls V: Skyrim*, and *Assassin's Creed: Revelations*). How will I manage all those games at once?

CHRISTIAN LEMIEUX PARTS UNKNOWN

Well, Christian, as problems go this ranks right up there with world hunger, global warming, and terrorism. Or not. Sometimes gamers have to sacrifice for their love affair by getting a job, sucking up to rich relatives, or selling blood and/or other assorted bodily fluids. And if all else fails, we can always rely on the fact that 51.2 percent of holiday releases will invariably be delayed until Q1.

No Joking

I was asking myself today, "Why is it so hard for me to find enjoyable videogames?" There are probably multiple facets and answers to that question, but one that really jumped out at me was the seeming lack of a comedy genre in the gaming industry. I've played many games that I thought were clever or offered me a chuckle or two, like *Crash Bandicoot* or *Jak and Daxter*, but even those don't quite do it for me, as they tend to cater to a younger demographic. The last game that truly caused me to bust a gut was *Portal 2*. It's laugh-out-loud funny and quotable. Much like many of my favorite comedy films, I can recall scenes and quotes with friends and still laugh about them. Comedy is a large facet of American society, so why does it seem to be mostly absent from the gaming industry?

JOSHUA MEINTS KALAMAZOO, MI

Like an awkward teen in their formative years, the games industry does seem to have a problem expressing emotions that range beyond headshots or decapitations. We, too, would like to see games that explore a more diverse range of human emotions and elements like love and humor. Recently, the trailer for Insomniac's Overstrike *did manage to elicit some chuckles from us, albeit in a wisecracking action movie-esque manner. It's not exactly high-concept material, but well, it's a start.*

Ask Anne

Q I'm itching for a new game. I want a great open-world RPG. My favorite games are *Oblivion* and *Mass Effect 2*. While I didn't really enjoy *Dragon Age*, I'm looking for a game like *Oblivion* that can hold me over until *Skyrim* comes out. Any suggestions?

RYAN CLARK
MOLINE, IL

A Hi Ryan. The obvious omissions in your list of open-world RPGs are *Fallout 3* and *Fallout: New Vegas*. But if you've already played the *Fallout* series, you'll have to try questing through imperfect genre-examples like *Nier* and *Two Worlds II* until *Skyrim* and another exciting open-world prospect, *Kingdoms of Amular: Reckoning*, arrive.

Off Target

While reading "The Movies that Shaped Modern Gaming" [Issue 45] I noticed that the *Saving Private Ryan* listing used a movie still from *The Longest Day*. Notice the Sherman tanks (pictured in still) on the beach during *Ryan's* memorable D-day invasion, where Tom Hank's Capt. Miller says, "We got no D-day tanks on the beach, Dog One is not open." While this is a small mistake, I am a WWII fan and watch *Ryan* on a daily basis, therefore I take pride in noting the error. However, your magazine is otherwise perfect.

DALE PARTS UNKNOWN

The photo in question was an official promo still for Saving Private Ryan *(the scene may or may not have appeared in the film, but was certainly shot for it). But seriously, how can you claim to be a WWII buff and say the still was from* The Longest Day*? Day was a black-and-white film! Time to turn in your dog tags.*

We Heart Flavio

Hello. I would like to inform that till today's date did not arrive PlayStation Magazine July. I await response.

FLAVIO CARONE BRAZIL

Flavio, you're our favorite—and perhaps only—Brazilian subscriber, but we can't go on meeting like this (unless you're related to Brazilian supermodels). We're betting the mailman steals your issues.

Mistaken Identity

In Issue #48, we inadvertently switched the photographs of Shigenori Soejima and Shoji Meguro in our *Catherine* feature. We attribute the confusion and error to both men's equally exceeding handsomeness.

Et Cetera

All the other stuff that distracts PTOM

Fuzion City Glide Scooter

"We in the games press tend to live a sedentary life. So I get what little exercise I can muster riding my Fuzion City Glide through the halls of the Future US offices. Whee!"

GARY STEINMAN

FYF FEST
SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 3RD

FYF Fest

"Just $35 to see Guided By Voices, The Weakerthans, Kid Dynamite, Explosions in the Sky, Descendents, and more of my favorite bands? This is going to be the best Labor Day ever!"

SCOTT BUTTERWORTH

Mario Batali Amici Brick Oven

"I am on a divine quest to create my own signature scratch-made pizza, but I lack the scratch to purchase this backyard brick oven. There's a free pizza in it for you if you send me one, Mario."

ROGER BURCHILL

Beat Radio

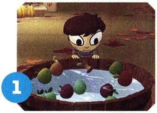
"I stumbled upon this band on YouTube. After listening to the song 'Sleepwalking' a million times, I picked up their album *Safe Inside the Sound* and haven't stopped listening since."

RYAN TALJONICK

PSN Best Games

It's the best of the best! Get the lowdown on this month's PSN goodies no one should live without.

BEST FULL GAMES



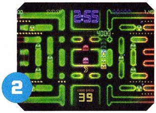
1

Tricks and Treats

Costume Quest

Sure, it's Halloween themed, but the adventure itself is timeless. With candy and monster-smiting in equal measure, this sugary delight is a charming homage to *Final Fantasy X-2*, enhanced by Tim Schafer's humor.

9
Pub **THQ**
Dev **Double Fine**



2

Retro Revival

Pac-Man Championship Ed.

There'll always be a place in our hearts for gaming's gluttonous yellow goober—but nostalgia be damned, this retro homage offers a whole new frenetic take on the classic gameplay.

9
Pub **Namco Bandai**
Dev **Namco Bandai**

3

Platforming Puzzle Racer

Joe Danger

A mix of *ExciteBike*-style racing and insane stunt-driven platforming action, this vibrant indie gem shines brightly among the best PSN offerings available. Getting wild and dangerous has never been this awesome.

9
Pub **Hello Games**
Dev **Hello Games**

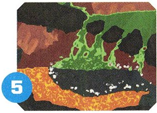
4

Zen Exploration

Flower

This gorgeous concept game makes blowing hordes of fluttering petals around a lush natural environment into an unforgettable experience that holds up against the biggest triple-A offerings. Don't pass this one up.

9
Pub **SCEA**
Dev **thatgamecompany**



5

Puzzle Shooter

PixelJunk Shooter

The fourth entry in the *PixelJunk* series is easily the best. Saving trapped mining colonists with a versatile, environmental puzzle-solving ship is a creative and challenging affair taxing both the mind and reflexes.

9
Pub **SCEA**
Dev **Q-Games**

6

Lettuce Defend Ourselves

Plants vs. Zombies

This ubiquitous tower defense game has made the platform rounds, but there's no denying its insidious charms and eternal goofiness. Hours will be spent meticulously maintaining the grid-like lawn in an attempt to fend off the rampaging waves of groaning, brain-chomping zombies.

9
Pub **SCEA**
Dev **PopCap Games**

7

Role-playing Puzzler

Might & Magic Clash of Heroes

Don't overlook *Heroes* with its throwback 2D visuals and turn-based battle system—the RPG-flavored puzzle action requires stacking creatures for attacks and building walls for defense. It may look and play old school, but it's still mighty fun and magically challenging.

9
Pub **Ubisoft**
Dev **Capybara Games**

8

Dolled-Up Adventure

Stacking

Double Fine games come chock full of personality and charm. Using babushka dolls to solve puzzles and explore a '30s Depression-era-esque world of miniature mannequins may not seem all that compelling, but it is. This is a fine argument for Double Fine to make more PSN titles.

8
Pub **THQ**
Dev **Double Fine**

9

Beat-'em-up Platformer

Outland

Outland offers a new twist on action platformers with its polarity-swapping mechanic: Switch between light and dark personas to deflect like-colored bullets and interact with like-colored platforms. Distinctive visuals enhance the beat-'em-up combat and projectile avoidance gameplay.

8
Pub **Ubisoft**
Dev **Housemarque**

10

Tower of Power

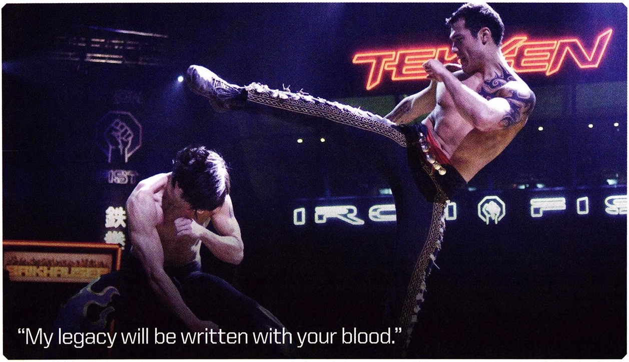
PixelJunk Monsters

What's one to do when monsters attack? How about earning funds and building offensive towers featuring varying attributes like speed, range, and power? Or, we could invite them in for diplomatic discussions and tea, but what fun is that?

8
Pub **SCEA**
Dev **Q-Games**

PSN Video Delivery Service Spotlight

What we're downloading to our PS3 this month



"My legacy will be written with your blood."

The Key of Free

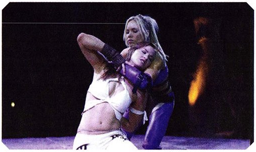
Tunes-loving PS3 owners can now try Music Unlimited for free. The 180-day trial to the cloud-based, digital music service allows streaming, commercial-free access to over seven million licensed tracks. It can also be enjoyed on the go via PSP, Xperia Play, and other mobile devices.

To access the trial, log on to your PS3 and click on the Music Unlimited service beneath the Music icon. Once the application has downloaded, follow the sign up instructions. The free trial offer is only open to PS3 owners who are 18 and older, living in the U.S., and have never previously subscribed to the Music Unlimited service.

Tekken

ETA **July 19** Rated **R** Genre **Action** Studio **Crystal Sky Pictures**

In a war-ravaged future, the ruthless Tekken Corporation placates the masses with its deadly King of the Iron Fist tournament. Enter Jin Kazama, who seeks to avenge the cruel murder of his mother and discover Tekken's secrets. Fans of videogame movies like *Mortal Kombat*, *DOA: Dead or Alive*, and *Street Fighter* should enjoy *Tekken*, but our fate, like Jin's, is still left to question. And yet, as gamers we are compelled to watch.



BEST FREE STUFF

1

More than Zero

Record of Agarest War Zero Misc. DLC

Soup-up this saucy turn-based combat RPG with free extras, including battle gear in the Shriveled Chicken pack, money and experience in the Point Addition pack, and adventure in the Extra Dungeon pack.

Pub **Aksys**
Dev **RED Idea Factory**

2

Monster hunting

Gods Eater Burst DLC

This slick bit of free DLC for the PSP RPG is packing several new challenge missions and two new Aragami foes to tackle in battle. Venus' beauty has a beastly streak, while the dragon-like Caligula is just plain wicked.

Pub **D3Publisher**
Dev **Shift Namco Bandai**

3

Adding to The Sprawl

Dead Space 2 Outbreak map pack

These two eerie new maps entice us to return to The Sprawl for some intense human vs. necromorph action in *Dead Space 2*'s multiplayer mode. We're packed and ready for the gorefest.

Pub **Electronic Arts**
Dev **Visceral Games**

4

Adult themes

Duke Nukem Forever Theme

Pay respect to Duke Nukem's bombastic, old school roots with an appropriately macho PS3 theme celebrating all that is manly and testosterone laden in the world. It's time to hail to the king, baby.

Pub **2K Games**
Dev **Gearbox Software**

5

Dats how Sims roll

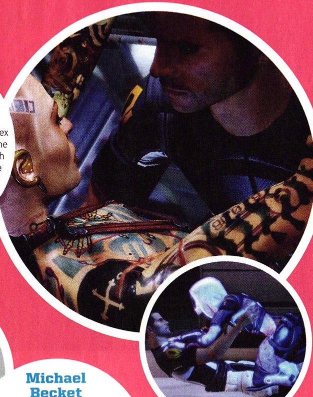
The Sims 3 Ford Focus Neon Nights

Sometimes Sims just want to beef up their image with a hot new ride and accessories. This DLC includes the 2012 Ford Focus and other goodies, including shirts, lights, stereos, and a dose of style.

Pub **Electronic Arts**
Dev **The Sims Studio**

Freaky Hookups

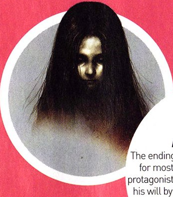
PlayStation's most inexplicable attractions and unfortunate choices



Shepard and the universe

Mass Effect 2

Compared to BioWare's other RPG, *Dragon Age*, *Mass Effect 2* takes a restrained approach to relations. Same-sex experimentation is out, but adventuresome Shep can happily sex his/her way through other species. The softly-lit, tasteful love scenes are great, but we'd love it if Shep stonewalled his way through a so-where-is-this-going conversation. Captain Kirk would be proud.



Michael Becket and Alma

FEAR 2: Project Origin

The ending of *FEAR 2* wins the "ick" award for most gruesome sexual encounter: protagonist Michael Becket is taken against his will by psychic emo-ghost Alma while he's in a hallucination. She's on top, and fertile—but unlike with her previous kids, at least she's no longer a candidate for MTV's *16 and Pregnant*.

Sonic and Princess Elise

Sonic the Hedgehog (2006)

Ah, yes, the purity of sexual relations between a human and an animal. Wait. What?! It's the preserve of deviants. Consequently, introducing a realistic human female into the world of Sonic the Hedgehog is a misjudgment of galactic proportions—and making her his girlfriend, and having them kiss? Well, that's Furry weird.

Pyramid Head and Mannequins

Silent Hill 2

One reason *Silent Hill 2* is king of psychological horror: the Pyramid Head monster that symbolizes cracking-up, sex-starved protagonist James Sunderland's psyche. In one unforgettable scene, Sunderland stumbles upon him... using...the two-halves-sewn-together meat mannequins that populate the world. Eww...

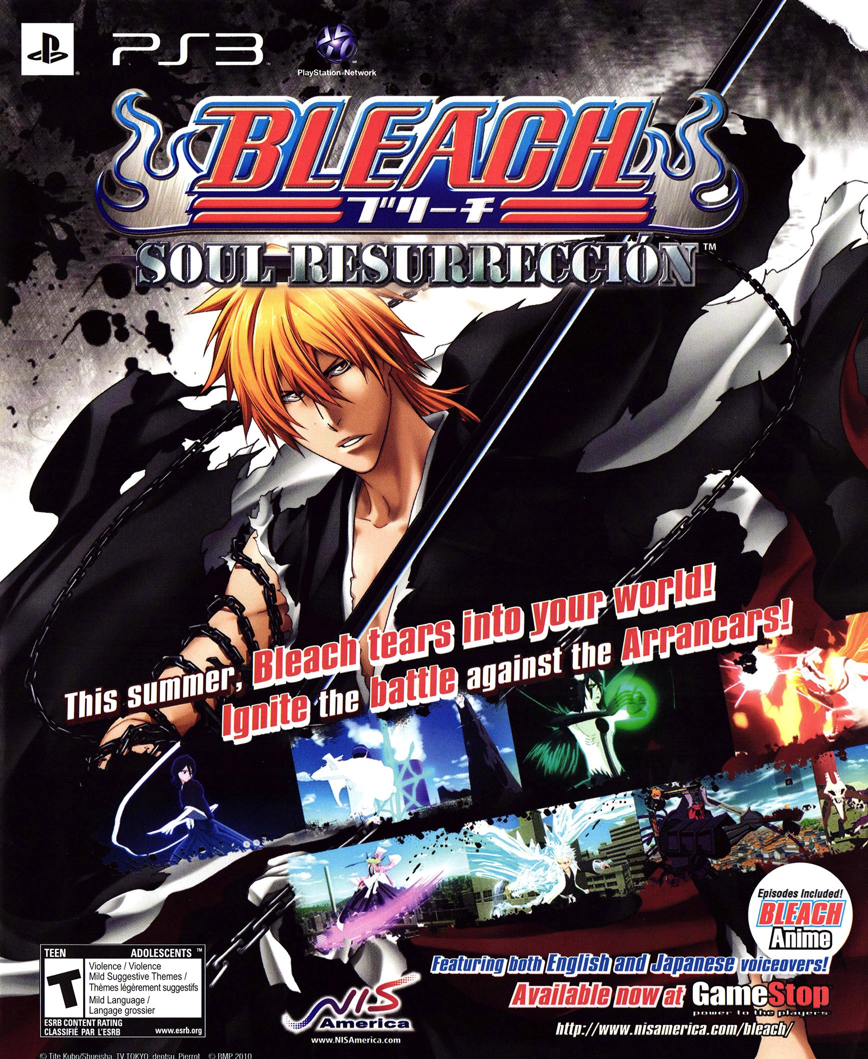
FISTO and you

Fallout: New Vegas

FISTO's just your average Protectron. But as part of the brilliantly named Wang Dang Atomic Tango mission, FISTO can be reprogramed as a sexbot. But why send him to the brothel and let them have all the fun? Turn him on and when the screen fades to black, a subtle whirring sound begins and FISTO starts...serving. It's a, uh, liberating sound effect.

PS3 PlayStation Network

BLEACH ブリーチ
SOUL RESURRECCIÓN™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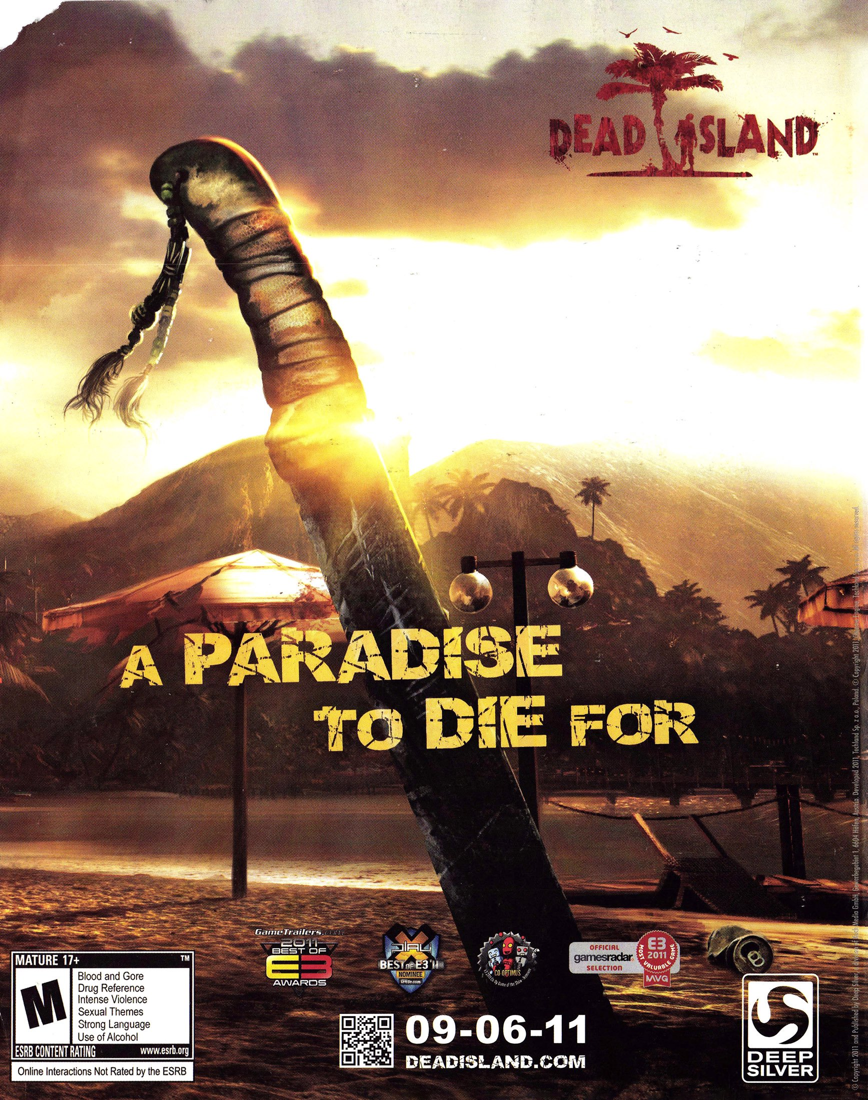
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M

Blood and Gore
Drug Reference
Intense Violence
Sexual Themes
Strong Language
Use of Alcohol

ESRB CONTENT RATING www.esrb.org

Online Interactions Not Rated by the ESRB

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